Lessons on Imamah and Wilayah

Mohammad Ali Shomali

Third Edition

In the Name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful

LESSONS ON
IMĀMAH AND WILĀYAH

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Islamic Centre of England

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Introduction

The present work was originally conceived as a series of fourteen lectures delivered for an international group of youths during an intensive course in the summer of 2004 in the city of Qum. A few years later, edited transcripts of those lectures with added references, were published in seven parts in the *Message of Thaqalayn*, vol. 12, Numbers 2, 3 & 4, vol. 13, Numbers 1 & 4, vol. 14, Numbers 1 & 2. Finally, those papers were edited further and organised as a book by Sr. Shahnaze Safieddine. References were again carefully checked, and more references were added by Mrs Mahnaz Heydarpoor.

This book contains eleven chapters. In these chapters, some of the major aspects of the subject of imamate are addressed. Efforts have been made to clearly explain every idea and to back up each claim with evidence from the Qur'an and Sunnah. To show that the doctrine of imamate is an Islamic idea and agreeable to all Muslims, narrations (*hadiths*) from major references collections of hadith of Sunni Muslims, such as six *Sahihs*

or *Musnad* of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal are cited. For maximum accuracy, in addition to English translation, Arabic texts of the hadiths are also cited so that our dear readers who know Arabic can examine them by themselves.

The first chapter starts with a discussion about the significance of imamate as a principle of Shi'a Islam and explains why in numerous Prophetic hadiths, failing to know the Imam of one's age is considered as dying in the Age of Ignorance. This chapter ends with an account of literal and technical meanings of "imam."

The second chapter explores the meaning of "Ahl al-Bayt." Referring to the Verses of Purity and Devotion and other hadiths, it is argued that "Ahl al-Bayt" is a technical term that refers only to Imam Ali, Lady Fatimah, Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn, and not include the wives of the Prophet or his other relatives. The chapter continues with an examination of the hadiths on twelve "leaders" or "successors" who come after Prophet Muhammad, and as long as they are there, Islam would be dignified, and the affairs of the Muslims would be fine. The chapter ends with reference to the twelve Imams from the progeny of Prophet Muhammad.

The third chapter demonstrates the authority of Ahl al-Bayt in teaching and presenting Islam. This authority has been discussed on two levels: First, it has been argued that it is permissible and justified for all Muslims to refer to Ahl al-Bayt for understanding Islamic teachings with respect to creed, morals, and practical rulings. Of course,

for Shi'a Muslims, this is obvious, and should be obvious for Sunni Muslims as well. One main reason is that Sunni scholars believe in the reliability of all the companions of Prophet Muhammad and in the validity of their opinions. Even if the Ahl al-Bayt were not recognised to be in a higher position than the companions of Prophet Muhammad, they should at least be treated like them and taken as reliable sources for understanding Islam. This part also contains discussions about the definition of *as-hāb* (plural form for *sahābi*) and their status. Secondly, it has been argued from the hadiths of Thaqalayn, Safīnah, the Gate of Hittah (repentance) and the Stars that it is necessary for all Muslims to refer to the Ahl al-Bayt.

The fourth chapter starts by explaining some major tasks of Prophet Muhammad and argues that apart from receiving revelation, the other tasks i.e. teaching Islam, judging among the people, and leading society are to be continued by his divinely appointed successors.

The fifth chapter explains why divine grace requires the presence of a divinely appointed guide among people. After Prophet Muhammad, this position is delegated to the infallible Imams.

The sixth chapter elaborates on the concept and scope of consultation (*shūrā*) in Islam and explains why in the case of certain positions like prophethood and imamate, the appointment is not through consultation or election and, instead, it must be through divine appointment.

The seventh chapter refers to different sets of Qur'anic verses that indicate the fact that rule belongs to God and it is only He who has the right to appoint the imams. Verses on sovereignty (*mulk*), governance (*hukm*), the power to choose (*ikhtiyār*), the power to command (*amr*), judgement, and obedience and guardianship (*wilāyah*) are cited and briefly analysed.

The eighth chapter studies some of the qualifications for imamate. The Imam must be the most qualified in the Muslim nation for undertaking religious and political leadership. In this chapter, special focus has been given to infallibility (*'ismah*); its definition, various views among Muslim schools of thought about it, and its nature and mechanisms.

The ninth and tenth chapters study what is considered in the classic books on the science of *kalam* as "Specific Imamate" (*al-Imamate al-Khāssah*). Based on the Qur'anic verses, the ninth chapter demonstrates the imamate of Ali ibn Abi Talib . The verses of guardianship (*wilāyah*), witness (*shahid*), propagation (*tabligh*), perfecting of the religion (*ikmāl*) and obedience (*tā'ah*) are studied.

The tenth chapter studies hadiths and references of the House (*al-dār*), rank (*manzilah*), the bird (*al-tayr*), Ghadir, and guardianship (*wilāyah*).

The eleventh chapter addresses the concept of *wilāyah*. Its literal and technical meanings are described and the two types of wilāyah are explained, i.e. the generative and the legislative. It has been argued that

both primarily belong only to God, but God may delegate aspects of them to his chosen servants, as he did in the case of Abraham, Jesus, and Prophet Muhammad.

In this book, conventional abbreviations used for "peace be upon him/her" such as (a), (as), (s), and so forth, have been removed from the text so as to preserve its fluency, and should not be misinterpreted as disrespecting the noble infallibles.

I take this opportunity to thank God for His countless blessings and bounties and, in particular, for the completion of this book. I humbly request Him to grant me opportunities to complete other ongoing works. I should also sincerely thank all those who have helped in the preparation of this book for publication. Two individuals deserve special words of thanks and appreciation: Mrs Mahnaz Heydarpoor for checking the entire draft of the book, adding references from original sources, and making valuable comments and Sr. Shahnaze Safieddine for transcribing the lectures, organising and editing them for publication in the *Message of Thaqalayn,* and then reorganising the material to convert it into a book. May God bless them and our dear readers with His endurable care!

Mohammad Ali Shomali
London, 24th Dec 2017

Chapter 1

A Core Principle of Shi'i Islam

Imamate, the universal administration of the Islamic Nation after prophethood, is one of the five core principles of Shi'i Islam. The other four are monotheism, divine justice, prophethood, and resurrection. These five doctrines were chosen by Shi'a leaders and scholars as that which identifies their faith particularly because of the controversies that arose among Muslim theologians on issues such as faith (*īmān*), free-will and predestination, and successorship to the Prophet. Each school undertook the task of exploring and discovering key elements in their own understanding of Islam, and whoever believes in them is considered a full believer in that denomination. In this chapter, we expound on the significance of imamate as a pillar of Shi'i Islam, and give the literal and technical meaning of the term *imam*.

Knowing the Imam of one's age

In principle, nearly all Muslims believe in imamate.[1] Prophet Muhammad said:

مَنْ مَاتَ لايَعْرِفُ إِمَامَهُ مَاتَ مِيتَةً جَاهِلِيَّة

> He who dies without knowing the imam of his age, dies a death of the Age of Ignorance.[2]

Interestingly, Islam does not name the era before the advent of Islam "the Age of Disbelief (*Kufr*) or Polytheism (*shirk*)"; rather, it is called, "the Age of Ignorance"' because the root of their problems was ignorance.[3] The pagans were not educated people of who based their disbelief or polytheism on reason. They preferred disbelief to belief in the truth without careful analysis, rendering their disbelief baseless.

Another version of the same hadith, narrated by both Sunnis and Shi'as reads:

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1. The exception is the Kharijites who denied any kind of rule.
2. Kulaynī, Muhammad, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 265. 'Allāmah Majlisī in *Biḥār al-Anwār,* vol. 8, p. 368. Allāmah recognizes this hadith as *mutawātir* for both Sunnis and Shi'as.

قد روت العامة و الخاصة متواترا من مات و لم يعرف إمام زمانه مات ميتة جاهلية

Mutawātir: a hadith (in its different versions) that has been frequently mentioned in every generation of the narrators of hadith that it leaves no chance for anyone to question its authenticity.

3. In Arabic, "jahl" means either not to know or not to act wisely and in this context, both can be true.

> He who dies without an imam, he has died as one from the Age of Ignorance.[4]

Here, instead of "without knowing the imam," stated the previous version, it simply says, "without an imam." Both hold the same meaning: in every age there is an imam and it is up to us to identify and know him.

Yet another account, available in Sunni sources denotes the same meaning:

مَنْ مَاتَ وَ لَيْسَ فِي عُنُقِهِ بَيْعَةٌ مَاتَ مِيتَةً جَاهِلِيَّةً

> He who dies without having paid allegiance to the imam of his time has died as one from the Age of Ignorance.[5]

Although both *having* an imam and *knowing* the imam of one's time are crucial, a person must also pay allegiance to, and follow, him. Imamate is the spirit of

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4. For example, see Kulaynī, Muhammad, *al-Kāfī,* vol. 1, p. 371, where Imam Bāqir is quoted as saying:

مَنْ مَاتَ وَ لَيْسَ لَهُ إِمَامٌ فَمِيتَتُهُ مِيتَةٌ جَاهِلِيَّةٌ

Elsewhere (*ibid.* p. 376), Kulaynī mentions the same version from Imam al-Sādiq quoting the Prophet.

For a Sunni source, one may refer to Ibn Ḥanbal, Abu Abdillah, *Musnad al-Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal,* vol. 28, p. 88, no. 16876. The original text is as follows:

مَنْ مَاتَ بِغَيْرِ إِمَامٍ مَاتَ مِيتَةً جَاهِلِيَّةً

5. Abū al-Ḥusayn 'Asākir al-Dīn, Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim,* vol. 3, p. 1478, no. 1851

Islam; and someone who lacks this spirit is likened to a person who lived and died in the pre-Islamic era.

It's worth noting here that knowing the imam of one's era is a dynamic and ongoing process. Whereas belief in God and the Prophet is fixed for all times, period when it comes to imamate, every generation must discover the living imam of their age so that they know what is expected of them in that particular time.

There were people who believed in the first imam, Imam Ali, but not the second imam. For those who continued to live after Imam Ali passed away, it was not enough to follow only him; it was their responsibility was to determine and follow the imam of their age—that is, Imam al-Hasan. Some Shi'as believed in the first four imams but refused to follow Imam al-Bāqir . Some believed in the first six imams, but not in the seventh imam, Imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim. Yet another group, called the Wāqifīds, believed in the first seven imams, but not in the eighth imam, Imam al-Ridha.

Thus, every person, in addition to all other doctrines, and in addition to the truth laid down by the Prophet, must find the imam of his or her own age. A believer is like a compass who always points to the *qiblah*. Just as the pointer must always adjust itself and not remain static, true believers must direct themselves towards the living imam regardless of the time period or region they inhabit.

In sum, nearly all Muslim theologians agree on the necessity of having an imam. Where they differ is in their

understanding of it—namely its significance and extent, its role, and the selection process that qualifies for an imam.

Literal and technical meanings of *imam*

Imam in its literal (and broadest) sense means "leader." This leader may be good or bad, and the extent of his role leadership varies whether it be the governor of a state, the head of a mosque, or the leader of a community. In this sense, even tyrants such as Pharaoh[6] or Yazīd[7] are called imams.

Good leaders guide others to the right path by God's command:

وَ جَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا وَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ فِعْلَ الْخَيْرَاتِ
وَ إِقَامَ الصَّلَوةِ وَ إِيتَاءَ الزَّكَاةِ وَ كَانُوا لَنَا عَابِدِينَ

We made them imams, guiding by Our command, and We revealed to them the performance of good deeds, the maintenance of prayers, and the giving of zakat, and they used to worship Us. (21:73)

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6. The Egyptian king during the time of Prophet Moses, infamous for his oppression and enslavement of the Israelites.

7. The Umayyad caliph as appointed by his father Muāwīyah I and ruled for three years from 680 CE until his death in 683 CE. He was notorious for his demand of Imam Ḥusayn to pay him an oath of allegiance in which the Imam refused, resulting in Yazīd's command to dispatch an army of 30,000 to massacre the Imam and his 72 companions.

Conversely, the Qur'an describes those leaders who invite others towards hell:

وَ جَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَدْعُونَ إِلَى النَّارِ وَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ لَايُنصَرُونَ

We made them leaders who invite to the Fire, and on the Day of Resurrection they will not receive any help. (28:41)

Whether a leader is good or immoral, he is nonetheless important. Everyone on the Day of Judgement, regardless of their moral standing, will be resurrected with, and identified by, his or her leader, rather than individually:

يَوْمَ نَدْعُواْ كُلَّ أُنَاسٍ بِإِمَامِهِم

The day that we call every group of people with their Imam. (17:71)

Even Pharaoh will lead of his people on the Day of Judgment.[8] Whom we choose to be our leaders in this world will be reflected in the next world: a noble leader will guide his followers toward eternal felicity, and a corrupt one will lead them toward punishment.

"Imam" in its technical sense refers to one who is responsible for all affairs of an Islamic nation, whether it be political, religious, or economical. In this sense, a true

8. Qur'an, 11:98

imam fits the criterion of upright leadership given that his moral status is crucial in the Shi'a concept of imamate.

The Shi'a imams, in particular, are the spiritual and political successors of Prophet Muhammad. They are twelve in number, the first starting with Imam Ali and ending with the current one, Imam al-Mahdi. Before we can get a deeper understanding of the Shi 'a notion of "imam," and in order to set the grounds for understanding the concept of imamate, in the next two chapters we will focus on who the "people of the [Prophet's] household" are and examine their status and authority.

Chapter 2

The Ahl al-Bayt

Shi'as believe that the Ahl al-Bayt, or "people of the household," include the Prophet's close relatives, namely his daughter, Fatimah; his cousin and son-in-law, Imam Ali; and his grandsons al-Hasan and al-Husayn. As we will later see, it also includes the nine succeeding imams. Sunnis generally believe that the Ahl al-Bayt comprises all the Prophet's Muslim relatives, including his children, wives, cousins, uncles, and aunts.

Since all Muslims unanimously agree that Ali, Fatimah, and their two sons, al-Hasan and al-Husayn, are included in the "people of the household" and that the Prophet's disbelieving relatives are excluded, the Shi'a position is the most cautious one, thus placing the burden of the argument on those who extend the scope of the "people of the household" beyond the four.

In what follows, we will present verses from the Qur'an as well as hadith from major Sunni sources that

clarity who are meant by the "people of the [Prophet's] household". The following presents narrations to clarify who constitutes the Household of the Prophet, and explores their role in presenting Islam in two stages: by a) justifying them as a reliable source in understanding Islam, and b) proving the necessity of adhering to their teachings to fully comprehend it.

The members of the Ahl al-Bayt

In many hadiths, Prophet Muhammad clarifies that the term *Ahl al-Bayt* refers to four unique people: Lady Fatimah, Imam Ali, Imam Ḥasan, and Imam Ḥusayn. In what follows, we refer to some verses of the Qur'an and some hadiths which can be found in major Sunni sources:

The Verse of Purification (Taṭhīr):

Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal narrates from Anas ibn Mālik:

> When the Verse of Purification was revealed, for the next six months the Prophet, on his way to the mosque for the Dawn prayer, would call at the house of Ali and Fatimah and say: "*Indeed God desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification.*"[1]

1. Ibn Ḥanbal, Abu Abdillah, *Musnad al-Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, vol. 21, p. 434, no. 14040. The original text is as follows:

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَ يُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيراً

Indeed God desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification. (33:33)

The Prophet said this every day to establish among the Muslims that they are indeed the Ahl al-Bayt. This hadith leaves no doubt in that at least these people are the most obvious instances of the Ahl al-Bayt, and they must be followed.

On another occasion, Ahmad ibn Hanbal narrates:

> The Prophet once took his cloak and covered Fatimah, Ali, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn with it and recited the verse: "*Indeed God desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification.*"[2]

عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ (ص): كَانَ يَمُرُّ بِبَابِ فَاطِمَةَ سِتَّةَ أَشْهُرٍ إِذَا خَرَجَ إِلَى صَلاةِ الْفَجْرِ، يَقُولُ: "الصَّلاةُ يَاأَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ، إِنَّما يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ، وَ يُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيراً."

2. Ibn Ḥanbal, Abu Abdillah Aḥmad b. Muhammad b. Ḥanbal, *Musnad al-Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, vol. 5, p. 180, no. 3061. The original text is as follows:

Muslim narrates from Aishah, Umm al-Mu'minīn:

> The Prophet left wearing a black woollen cloak, when Ḥasan, son of Ali, came to him, and the Prophet took him under his cloak. Then Ḥusayn came and joined them. Then Fatimah came and entered as well. Then Ali did the same. The cloak covered the Prophet, Ali, Fatimah, Hasan, and Husayn. Then the Prophet recited: "*Indeed God desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification.*"[3]

Tirmidhī in his *Sunan*[4] narrates from 'Umar ibn Abī Salamah,[5] the stepson of the Prophet:

> When [the verse of purification] was revealed to the Prophet in the house of Umm Salamah, he asked Ali, Fatimah, Hasan and Husayn to

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وَأَخَذَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (ص) ثَوْبَهُ فَوَضَعَهُ عَلَى عَلِيٍّ، وَفَاطِمَةَ، وَحَسَنٍ، وَحُسَيْنٍ، فَقَالَ: "إِنَّما يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَ يُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيراً" [الأحزاب: 33]

3. Abū al-Ḥusayn 'Asākir al-Dīn, Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Saḥīḥ Muslim*, vol. 4, p. 1883, no. 2424. The original text is as follows:

قَالَتْ عَائِشَةُ: خَرَجَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلَّم غَدَاةً وَ عَلَيْهِ مِرْطٌ مُرَحَّلٌ ، مِنْ شَعْرٍ أَسْوَدَ. فَجَاءَ الْحَسَنُ بْنُ عَلِيٍّ فَأَدْخَلَهُ. ثُمَّ جَاءَ الْحُسَيْنُ فَدَخَلَ مَعَهُ. ثُمَّ جَاءَتْ فَاطِمَةُ فَأَدْخَلَهَا. ثُمَّ جَاءَ عَلِيٌّ فَأَدْخَلَهُ. ثُمَّ قَالَ: «إِنَّما يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَ يُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيراً» (الأحزاب/33).

4. One of the six *Sihāh*

5. Umm Salamah: One of the wives of the Prophet who bore 'Umar from her first husband, Abī Salamah.

> go under his cloak. He then said: "O Allah! These are my Ahl al-Bayt, so repel all impurity from them and purify them with a thorough purification." Umm Salamah asked the Prophet, "Am I one of your household?" To which he replied, "You have your own place, you are on the right path."[6]

Albeit notable for her piety, she was not included among the Ahl al-Bayt.

The Verses of Devotion (Mawaddah)

قُل لاأَسْئَلُكمُ عَلَيْهِ أجرًا إلا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِي الْقُرْبىَ

Say, 'I do not ask you any reward for it except love of [my] relatives.' (42:23)

According to the verse, the Prophet does not expect any reward for spreading the divine message. He only

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6. Tirmidhī, Muhammad b. 'Isā, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, vol. 5, p. 192, no. 3205. The original text is as follows:

عَنْ عُمَرَ بْنِ أَبِي سَلَمَةَ رَبِيبِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلَّم قَالَ: لَمَّا نَزَلَتْ هَذِهِ الآيَةُ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلَّم: "إِنَّما يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَ يُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيراً" [الأحزاب: 23] فِي بَيْتِ أُمِّ سَلَمَةَ، فَدَعَا فَاطِمَةَ وَ حَسَنًا وَ حُسَيْنًا فَجَلَّلَهُمْ بِكِسَاءٍ، وَ عَلِيٌّ خَلْفَ ظَهْرِهِ فَجَلَّلَهُ بِكِسَاءٍ، ثُمَّ قَالَ: «اللَّهُمَّ هَؤُلاءِ أَهْلُ بَيْتِي فَأَذْهِبْ عَنْهُمْ الرِّجْسَ وَ طَهِّرْهُمْ تَطْهِيرًا». قَالَتْ أُمُّ سَلَمَةَ: وَ أَنَا مَعَهُمْ يَا نَبِيَّ اللَّهِ؟ قَالَ: «أَنْتِ عَلَى مَكَانِكِ وَ أَنْتِ عَلَى خَيْرٍ».

Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal also narrates another version of this hadith in his *Musnad*, vol. 28, p. 195, no. 16988.

asks that his followers devote themselves to his family to achieve God's pleasure. Indeed, one of the qualities the prophets shared was that they asked people for nothing in return for their work:

قُلْ مَا سَأَلْتُكُم مِّنْ أَجْرٍ فَهُوَ لَكُمْ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلا عَلَىَ اللَّهِ وَ هُوَ عَلَىَ كلُ شىء شهَيدِ

Say, "Whatever reward I may have asked you is for your own good. My [true] reward lies only with God, and He is witness to all things." (34:47)

Thus, the only ones benefitting from this love and devotion are the followers of his family. By since looking to the Ahl al-Bayt as guides for their worldly and religious affairs, they grow closer to God. In verse 25:57, God says:

قُلْ مَا أَسْئَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِلا مَن شَاءَ أَن يَتَّخِذَ إِلىَ رَبِّهِ سَبِيلا

I do not ask you any reward for it, except that anyone who wishes should take the way to his Lord. (25:57)

Prophet Muhammad is the only prophet in the Qur'an to say this because he is the Seal of the Prophets (*khātam al-nabīyyīn*). He showed the path towards God, and because there is no subsequent prophet who will carry on the task of presenting true Islam, it must henceforth continue through imamate.

وَ يَوْمَ يَعَضُّ الظَّالِمُ عَلىٰ يَدَيْهِ يَقُولُ يَالَيْتَنِى إتَّخَذْتُ مَعَ الرَّسُولِ سَبِيلا يَاوَيْلَتى لَيْتَنى لَمْ أَتَّخِذْ فُلاناً خَلِيلا

A day when the wrongdoer will bite his hands, saying, "I wish I had followed the Apostle's way! Woe to me! I wish I had not taken so and so as a friend!" (25:27–28)

On the Day of Judgment, the unjust oppressor will wish to have followed the Prophet because he showed the path towards God, and no further Prophet will carry on this task. After the Prophet, the Ahl al-Bayt represent the Path towards God.

Thus, we must ask, who can represent the Path? It is none other than an infallible. And who chooses the infallible? It is none other than God. Only He can decide who it is that, if we love them, we have compensated the Prophet, and if we follow them, we have followed the Prophet's path. A person's act of kindness must commensurate with his or her compensation, whether through financial means or through spiritual means. Therefore, because our love for the Ahl al-Bayt is the compensation for the Prophet's mission, because they show us the path towards God. Therefore, verse 34:47 confirms that this compensation is for our benefit because it paves the way toward Him.

Hadith of the Two Precious Legacies (Thaqalayn)

Zayd ibn Arqam was one of the companions of the Prophet. Years after the death of the Prophet, people

urged him to tell them what he heard from the Prophet. Thereupon he replied, "I have become very old and have forgotten some of the Prophet's sayings so accept what I narrate to you, and what I fail to narrate, do not compel me to tell you." What he clearly remembered was this:

> Once the Prophet stood up to deliver a speech in a place called Khumm, situated between Mecca and Medina. The Prophet praised God, gave moral advice, and then said: "O people, know that I am a human being and soon the Angel of Death will call me and I will answer. Surely I am leaving among you two precious things: The first is the book of God—a guidance and light—so hold on to God's book and adhere to it; the second is my Ahl al-Bayt." Then he repeated three times, "I ask you to remember God in the way you treat them."
>
> Ḥuṣayn ibn Sabrah then asked, "O Zayd, who are the Ahl al-Bayt of the Prophet? Are his wives included?" Zayd replied, "The wives of the Prophet are his relatives, but his Ahl al-Bayt are those who cannot accept charity." He was then asked, "So who are they?" Zaid replied, "The family of Ali [cousin of the Prophet], the family of 'Aqīl, the family of Ja'far [the other brother of Ali], and the family of 'Abbas [the uncle of the Prophet and Ali]."[7]

7. Abū al-Ḥusayn 'Asākir al-Dīn, Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, vol. 4, p. 1873, no. 2408. The original text is as follows:

Zayd was not a Shi'a, yet he knew that the wives are excluded. At the same time, however, he wrongly believed that the Prophet's cousins and uncle are included; although they are *sayyid* [8] (whereby certain rulings apply only to them), there are other rulings that

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حَدِّثْنِي يَزِيدُ بْنُ حَيَّانَ. قَالَ: انْطَلَقْتُ أَنَا وَ حُصَيْنُ بْنُ سَبْرَةَ وَ عُمَرُ بْنُ مُسْلِمٍ إِلَى زَيْدِ بْنِ أَرْقَمَ. فَلَمَّا جَلَسْنَا إِلَيْهِ قَالَ لَهُ حُصَيْنٌ: لَقَدْ لَقِيتَ، يَا زَيْدُ! خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا. رَأَيْتَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلَّمَ. وَ سَمِعْتَ حَدِيثَهُ. وَ غَزَوْتَ مَعَهُ. وَ صَلَّيْتَ خَلْفَهُ. لَقَدْ لَقِيتَ، يَا زَيْدُ! خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا. حَدِّثْنَا، يَا زَيْدُ! مَا سَمِعْتَ مِنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلَّمَ. قَالَ: يَا ابْنَ أَخِي! وَ اللَّهِ! لَقَدْ كَبِرَتْ سِنِّي. وَ قَدُمَ عَهْدِي. وَ نَسِيتُ بَعْضَ الَّذِي كُنْتُ أَعِي مِنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلَّمَ. فَمَا حَدَّثْتُكُمْ فَاقْبَلُوا، وَ مَا لا، فَلا تُكَلِّفُونِيهِ. ثُمَّ قَالَ: قَامَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (ص) يَوْمًا فِينَا خَطِيبًا. بِمَاءٍ يُدْعَى خُمًّا. بَيْنَ مَكَّةَ وَ الْمَدِينَةِ. فَحَمِدَ اللَّهَ وَ أَثْنَى عَلَيْهِ. وَ وَعَظَ وَ ذَكَّرَ. ثُمَّ قَالَ: «أَمَّا بَعْدُ. أَلا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ! فَإِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ يُوشِكُ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ رَسُولُ رَبِّي فَأُجِيبَ. وَ أَنَا تَارِكٌ فِيكُمْ ثَقَلَيْنِ: أَوَّلُهُمَا كِتَابُ اللَّهِ فِيهِ الْهُدَى وَ النُّورُ فَخُذُوا بِكِتَابِ اللَّهِ. وَ اسْتَمْسِكُوا بِهِ» فَحَثَّ عَلَى كِتَابِ اللَّهِ وَ رَغَّبَ فِيهِ. ثُمَّ قَالَ: «وَ أَهْلُ بَيْتِي. أُذَكِّرُكُمُ اللَّهَ فِي أَهْلِ بَيْتِي. أُذَكِّرُكُمُ اللَّهَ فِي أَهْلِ بَيْتِي. أُذَكِّرُكُمُ اللَّهَ فِي أَهْلِ بَيْتِي». فَقَالَ لَهُ حُصَيْنٌ: وَ مَنْ أَهْلُ بَيْتِهِ؟ يَا زَيْدُ! أَلَيْسَ نِسَاؤُهُ مِنْ أَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ؟ قَالَ: نِسَاؤُهُ مِنْ أَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ. وَ لَكِنْ أَهْلُ بَيْتِهِ مَنْ حُرِمَ الصَّدَقَةَ بَعْدَهُ. قَالَ: وَ مَنْ هُمْ؟ قَالَ: هُمْ آلُ عَلِيٍّ، وَ آلُ عَقِيلٍ، وَ آلُ جَعْفَرٍ، وَ آلُ عَبَّاسٍ. قَالَ: كُلُّ هَؤُلاءِ حُرِمَ الصَّدَقَةَ؟ قَالَ: نَعَمْ.

8. Descendants of the Banī Ḥāshim, a clan in the Quraysh tribe, and named after the great-grandfather of Prophet Muhammad.

are exclusive to the descendants of Prophet Muhammad such as the prohibition of taking charity.

In another version of this hadith, Zayd explains why the wives are not included among the Ahl al-Bayt:

> I swear by God; a wife lives with her husband for a period and then she may get divorced and return to her own father and family.[9]

That is, a wife is included as part of the "household" of her parents, as they are the ones she would return if she divorced or became a widow. Thus, the descendants of the Prophet through his daughter, Lady Fatimah, are "the people of the [Prophet's] household."

Hadith on the Three Sayings of the Prophet:

Sa'd b. Abī Waqqāṣ was once asked by Mu'awīyah why he refused to verbally abuse Ali, to which he replied,

> I remember three sayings of the Prophet about Ali, and this caused me not to say anything wrong about him. If I possessed even one of these qualities, it would be better for me than red camels:[10] (1) When the Prophet was going for the Battle of Tabūk and left Ali in Medina,

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9. Abū al-Ḥusayn 'Asākir al-Dīn, Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥiḥ Muslim*, vol. 4, p. 1874. The original text is as follows:

فَقُلْنَا: مَنْ أَهْلُ بَيْتِهِ؟ نِسَاؤُهُ؟ قَالَ: لا. وَ ايْمُ اللَّهِ! إِنَّ الْمَرْأَةَ تَكُونُ مَعَ الرَّجُلِ الْعَصْرَ مِنَ الدَّهْرِ. ثُمَّ يُطَلِّقُهَا فَتَرْجِعُ إِلَى أَبِيهَا وَ قَوْمِهَا. أَهْلُ بَيْتِهِ أَصْلُهُ وَ عَصَبَتُهُ الَّذِينَ حُرِمُوا الصَّدَقَةَ بَعْدَهُ.

10. Red camels were considered valuable during that era.

Ali was saddened at not having the good fortune to join the army and fight for the sake of God. He went to the Prophet, saying, "Do you leave me with the women and children?" The Prophet replied, "Are you not happy to be to me as Aaron was to Moses, except that there will be no prophet after me?" (2) I heard from the Prophet on the day of Battle of Khaybar, "Certainly I will give the flag [of Islam] to a man that loves Allah and His Messenger and is loved by Allah and His Messenger." We hoped to be given the flag, but the Prophet said, "Call Ali for me!" Ali came while suffering from pain in his eyes. The Prophet then gave him the flag, and at his hands Allah granted us victory. (3) When the verse of *Mubāhalah* was revealed the Prophet called Ali, Fatimah, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn, and said, "My Lord! These are my household (Ahl al-Bayt)."[11]

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11. Abū al-Ḥusayn 'Asākir al-Dīn, Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, vol. 4, p. 1871. The original text is as follows:

أَمَرَ مُعَاوِيَةُ بْنُ أَبِي سُفْيَانَ سَعْدًا فَقَالَ: مَا مَنَعَكَ أَنْ تَسُبَّ أَبَا التُّرَابِ؟ فَقَالَ: أَمَّا مَا ذَكَرْتُ ثَلَاثًا قَالَهُنَّ لَهُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلَّمَ، فَلَنْ أَسُبَّهُ. لأَنْ تَكُونَ لِي وَاحِدَةٌ مِنْهُنَّ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِنْ حُمْرِ النَّعَمِ. سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلَّمَ يَقُولُ لَهُ، خَلَّفَهُ فِي بَعْضِ مَغَازِيهِ، فَقَالَ لَهُ عَلِيٌّ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ! خَلَّفْتَنِي مَعَ النِّسَاءِ وَ الصِّبْيَانِ؟ فَقَالَ لَهُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (ص): «أَمَا تَرْضَى أَنْ تَكُونَ مِنِّي بِمَنْزِلَةِ هَارُونَ مِنْ مُوسَى. إِلا أَنَّهُ لانُبُوَّةَ بَعْدِي.» وَ سَمِعْتُهُ يَقُولُ يَوْمَ خَيْبَرَ: «لأُعْطِيَنَّ الرَّايَةَ رَجُلا يُحِبُّ اللَّهَ وَ رَسُولَهُ، وَ يُحِبُّهُ اللَّهُ وَ رَسُولُهُ.» قَالَ: فَتَطَاوَلْنَا لَهَا فَقَالَ: «ادْعُوا لِي

In addition to the hadiths in which the expressions like "Ahl al-Bayt" and "qurbā" are applied to Lady Fatimah and Imam Ali, Imam Ḥasan, and Imam Ḥusayn, a set of hadiths also refer to the twelve imams and justify their authority. This set of hadiths can also shed light on who are meant by the "Ahl al-Bayt."

The twelve imams

In addition to the hadiths in which such expressions as Ahl al-Bayt and *qurbā* are applied to Imam Ali, Lady Fatimah, and their two sons, a set of hadiths, also from Sunni sources, refer to the twelve imams, justifying their authority. This set of hadiths can also shed light on who are meant by the Ahl al-Bayt.

The Twelver Shi'a (*ithnā 'asharī*), who constitute the clear majority of Shi'a Muslims, believe that the Prophet was succeeded by twelve imams:

1. Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (martyred 40/659)[12]
2. Imam Hasan ibn 'Ali (50/669)
3. Imam Husayn ibn 'Ali (61/680)

عَلِيًّا» فَأُتِيَ بِهِ أَرْمَدَ. فَبَصَقَ فِي عَيْنِهِ وَ دَفَعَ الرَّايَةَ إِلَيْهِ. فَفَتَحَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ. وَ لَمَّا نَزَلَتْ هَذِهِ الآيَةُ: فَقُلْ تَعالَوْا نَدْعُ أَبْناءَنا وَ أَبْناءَكُمْ [آل عمران/ 61] دَعَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (ص) عَلِيًّا وَ فَاطِمَةَ وَ حَسَنًا وَ حُسَيْنًا فَقَالَ «اللَّهُمَّ! هَؤُلاءِ أَهْلِي».

12. Imam 'Ali was the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law (the husband of the Lady Fatimah). He was the first man to embrace Islam.

4. Imam Ali ibn Husayn (95/712)
5. Imam Muhammad ibn 'Ali (114/732)
6. Imam Ja'far ibn Muhammad (148/765)
7. Imam Musa ibn Ja'far (183/799)
8. Imam Ali ibn Musa (203/817)
9. Imam Muhammad ibn 'Ali (220/835)
10. Imam Ali ibn Muhammad (254/868)
11. Imam Hasan ibn Ali (260/872)
12. Imam al-Mahdi (born 255/868)

On the death of his father in AH 260, the twelfth Imam went into occultation (*ghaybah*), appearing only to a few leading Shi'a.

The belief in a saviour is shared by most (if not all) religions. In Islam, the idea of a saviour is very deliberately presented in the doctrine of al-Mahdi (the Guided) who will rise with divine blessing and fill the earth with justice after it has been filled with injustice and oppression. The idea of a saviour or a good end for the world is indicated in many Qur'anic verses and hadiths, for example:

> *We have written in the Psalms following the Reminder: "My honourable servants shall inherit the earth."* (21:105)

> *Yet we wanted to endow those who were considered inferior on earth, and make them into leaders and make them [Our] heirs.* (28:5)

In what follows, a few of the many hadiths on the Mahdi narrated in major Sunni sources will be referred to.

The Prophet said:

> Even if the entire duration of the world's existence has been exhausted and only one day is left (before the Day of Judgment), God will expand that day to such a length of time to accommodate the kingdom of a person from my household who will be called by my name.[13]

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13. *Sunan* of Abu Dawud, Kitab al-Mahdi, vol. 4, p. 1831, no. 4282. According to Abu Dawud, the hadith ends with, "He will fill the earth with justice as it will have been full of injustice and oppression." The Arabic text is as follows:

عَنْ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلَّمَ قَالَ: «لَوْ لَمْ يَبْقَ مِنْ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا يَوْمٌ»- قَالَ زَائِدَةُ فِي حَدِيثِهِ: «لَطَوَّلَ اللَّهُ ذَلِكَ الْيَوْمَ»- ثُمَّ اتَّفَقُوا: «حَتَّى يَبْعَثَ فِيهِ رَجُلًا مِنِّي أَوْ مِنْ أَهْلِ بَيْتِي يُوَاطِئُ اسْمُهُ اسْمِي وَ اسْمُ أَبِيهِ اسْمُ أَبِي زَادَ فِي حَدِيثِ فِطْرٍ: «يَمْلَأُ الْأَرْضَ قِسْطًا وَ عَدْلًا كَمَا مُلِئَتْ ظُلْمًا وَ جَوْرًا»- وَ قَالَ فِي حَدِيثِ سُفْيَانَ: «لَا تَذْهَبُ أَوْ لَا تَنْقَضِي الدُّنْيَا حَتَّى يَمْلِكَ الْعَرَبَ رَجُلٌ مِنْ أَهْلِ بَيْتِي يُوَاطِئُ اسْمُهُ اسْمِي.»

Ibid. no. 4283 reads as follows:

عَنْ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلَّمَ قَالَ: «لَوْ لَمْ يَبْقَ مِنْ الدَّهْرِ إِلَّا يَوْمٌ لَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ رَجُلًا مِنْ أَهْلِ بَيْتِي يَمْلَؤُهَا عَدْلًا كَمَا مُلِئَتْ»

See also *Sunan* of al-Tirmidhi, Kitab al-Fitan, Bab-u Ma Jaa'a fi al-Mahdi, vol. 4, p. 245, numbers 2156 & 2157. The Arabic text is as follows:

عَنْ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلَّمَ قَالَ: «يَلِي رَجُلٌ مِنْ أَهْلِ بَيْتِي يُوَاطِئُ اسْمُهُ اسْمِي».

He also said:

> Al-Mahdi is one of us, the members of the household (Ahl al-Bayt). God will prepare his affairs for him in one night.[14]

Furthermore, the Prophet said:

> Al-Mahdi will be of my family, of the descendants of Fatimah.[15]

Jabir b. Abdullah al-Ansari heard the Messenger of God saying:

قَالَ عَاصِمٌ: وَ أَخْبَرَنَا أَبُو صَالِحٍ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ قَالَ: لَوْ لَمْ يَبْقَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا يَوْمٌ لَطَوَّلَ اللَّهُ ذَلِكَ الْيَوْمَ حَتَّى يَلِيَ.

See also *Musnad* of Ahmad, Musnad al-'Asharah al-Mubashsharin bi al-Jannah, and *Sunan* of ibn Mājah, Kitab al-Jihād.

14. *Sunan* of Ibn Majah, Kitab al-Fitan, vol. 5, p. 541, no. 4085. The Arabic text is as follows:

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلَّمَ: «الْمَهْدِيُّ مِنَّا، أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ، يُصْلِحُهُ اللَّهُ فِي لَيْلَةٍ».

Musnad of Ahmad, Musnad al-'Asharah al-Mubashsharin bi al-Jannah, vol. 2, p. 74, no. 645. The Arabic text is as follows:

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: «الْمَهْدِيُّ مِنَّا أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ، يُصْلِحُهُ اللَّهُ فِي لَيْلَةٍ»

15. *Sunan* of Abu Dawud, Kitab al-Mahdi, vol. 4, p. 1832, no. 4284. The Arabic text is as follows:

عَنْ أُمِّ سَلَمَةَ، قَالَتْ: سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلَّمَ يَقُولُ: «الْمَهْدِيُّ مِنْ عِتْرَتِي مِنْ وَلَدِ فَاطِمَةَ»

See also *Sunan* of Ibn Majah, Kitab al-Fitan.

> A group of my nation will fight for the truth until the Day of Judgment. When Jesus, son of Mary, descends, and their leader will ask him to lead the prayer, Jesus will decline, saying: "No, verily among you, God has made leaders for others to honour this nation."[16]

In one set of hadiths, the words "emir" and "caliph" are used to denote the twelve successors of the Prophet. Jabir ibn Samura said, "I heard the Prophet saying, 'There

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16. *Sahih* of Muslim, Kitab al-Iman, vol. 3, p. 1524, no. 1923. The Arabic text is as follows:

أَخْبَرَنِي أَبُو الزُّبَيْرِ، أَنَّهُ سَمِعَ جَابِرَ بْنَ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ يَقُولُ: سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلَّمَ يَقُولُ: «لَا تَزَالُ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْ أُمَّتِي يُقَاتِلُونَ عَلَى الْحَقِّ، ظَاهِرِينَ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ».

See also *Musnad* of Ahmad, Baqi Musnad al-Mukthirin, vol. 23 p. 63, no. 14720. The Arabic text is as follows:

عَنْ جَابِرٍ أَنَّهُ سَمِعَ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ:" لَا تَزَالُ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْ أُمَّتِي يُقَاتِلُونَ عَلَى الْحَقِّ ظَاهِرِينَ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ"، قَالَ: "فَيَنْزِلُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ، فَيَقُولُ أَمِيرُهُمْ: تَعَالَ صَلِّ بِنَا، فَيَقُولُ: لَا إِنَّ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ أُمَرَاءُ، لِيُكْرِمَ اللَّهُ هَذِهِ الْأُمَّةَ"

See also Ibid. p. 335, no. 15127:

أَخْبَرَنِي أَبُو الزُّبَيْرِ، أَنَّهُ سَمِعَ جَابِرَ بْنَ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، يَقُولُ: سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ: "لَا تَزَالُ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْ أُمَّتِي يُقَاتِلُونَ عَلَى الْحَقِّ ظَاهِرِينَ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ، قَالَ: فَيَنْزِلُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ فَيَقُولُ أَمِيرُهُمْ: تَعَالَ صَلِّ بِنَا، فَيَقُولُ: لَا إِنَّ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ أُمَرَاءُ تَكْرِمَةَ اللَّهِ هَذِهِ الْأُمَّةَ"

will be twelve leaders (*amīr*).' He then said something I did not hear. My father said [he said], 'All of them will be from Quraysh.'"[17]

In a slightly different version, "caliph" is used instead of "*amīr*."[18]

In another set of hadiths, the Prophet assures that after him, there will always be a Qurayshite imam on earth, and as long as the public are following their imam, Islam will be in a strong position with the welfare of society in good hands.

The Prophet is reported to have said:

> This religion will be exalted as long as there are twelve caliphs.[19]

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17. Quraysh is the same tribe as the Prophet's. Bukhārī, Muhammad b. Ismāeil, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, vol. 11, p. 70, no. 6457. The original text is as follows:

يَكُونُ اثْنَا عَشَرَ أَمِيرًا. فَقَالَ كَلِمَةً لَمْ أَسْمَعْهَا. فَقَالَ أَبِي: إِنَّهُ قَالَ كُلُّهُمْ مِنْ قُرَيْشٍ.

This hadith also is mentioned in al-Tirmidhī, Muhammad b. 'Isā, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, vol. 4, p. 241, no. 2223 and Ibn Ḥanbal, Abu Abdillah, *Musnad al-Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, vol. 34, p. 529, no. 21050.

18. Abū al-Ḥusayn 'Asākir al-Dīn, Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Saḥīḥ Muslim*, vol. 3, p. 1452, Kitāb al-Imāmah (Leadership), no. 1821. The original text is as follows:

دَخَلْتُ مَعَ أَبِي عَلَى النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلَّمَ. فَسَمِعْتُهُ يَقُولُ: «إِنَّ هَذَا الأَمْرَ لاَيَنْقَضِي حَتَّى يَمْضِيَ فِيهِمْ اثْنَا عَشَرَ خَلِيفَةً». قَالَ: ثُمَّ تَكَلَّمَ بِكَلاَمٍ خَفِيَ عَلَيَّ. قَالَ: فَقُلْتُ لأَبِي: مَا قَالَ؟ قَالَ: «كُلُّهُمْ مِنْ قُرَيْشٍ».

This religion will continue as long as there exists twelve caliphs.[20]

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19. Abū Dāwūd, Sulaymān b. Ash'ath, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, Kitāb al-Mahdī, vol. 4, p. 1830, no. 4280. The original text is as follows:

سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ (ص) يَقُولُ: لايَزَالُ هَذَا الدِّينُ عَزِيزاً إِلَى اثْنَىْ عَشَرَ خَلِيفَةً قَالَ: فَكَبَّرَ النَّاسُ وَ ضَجُّوا، ثُمَّ قَالَ كَلِمَةً خَفِيَتْهً. قُلْتُ لأَبِي: يَا أَبَتِ مَا قَالَ؟ قَالَ: «كُلُّهُمْ مِنْ قُرَيْشٍ».

Abū al-Ḥusayn 'Asākir al-Dīn, Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* vol. 3, p. 1453, Kitāb al-Imāmah (Leadership):

سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ (ص)يَقُولُ: «لايَزَالُ الإِسْلامُ عَزِيزاً إِلَى اثْنَىْ عَشَرَ خَلِيفَةً» ثُمَّ قَالَ كَلِمَةً لَمْ أَفْهَمْهَا. فَقُلْتُ لأَبِي: مَا قَالَ؟ فَقَالَ «كُلُّهُمْ مِنْ قُرَيْشٍ.»

Ibn Ḥanbal, Abu Abdillah, *Musnad al-Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, vol. 34, p. 482, no. 20951 and p. 517 no. 21020:

سَمِعْتُ النَّبِيَّ (ص) يَقُولُ: "لايَزَالُ الإِسْلامُ عَزِيزاً إِلَى اثْنَىْ عَشَرَ خَلِيفَةً." فَقَالَ كَلِمَةً خَفِيَتْهً لَمْ أَفْهَمْهَا، قَالَ: فَقُلْتُ لأَبِي: مَا قَالَ؟ قَالَ:" كُلُّهُمْ مِنْ قُرَيْشٍ."

Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal also has mentioned this hadith with slight differences in the same volume in p. 461, no. 20905 and no. 20906, p. 449, no. 20879 and 20880, p. 427, no. 20838.

20. Abū Dāwūd, Sulaymān b. Ash'ath, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, Kitāb al-Mahdī, vol. 4, p. 1830, no. 4279. The original text is as follows:

«لايَزَالُ هَذَا الدِّينُ قَائِمًا حَتَّى يَكُونَ عَلَيْكُمْ اثْنَا عَشَرَ خَلِيفَةً كُلُّهُمْ تَجْتَمِعُ عَلَيْهِ الأُمَّةُ» فَسَمِعْتُ كَلامًا مِنَ النَّبِيِّ (ص) لَمْ أَفْهَمْهُ، قُلْتُ لأَبِي: مَا يَقُولُ؟ قَالَ: «كُلُّهُمْ مِنْ قُرَيْشٍ».

> The people's affairs will continue to be properly conducted as long as they are governed by twelve men.[21]

Each of the hadiths mentioned above are followed by a phrase from the Prophet in which he says, "...All of them are from Quraysh." Another version reads:

> So long as there remains two people on earth, there will be one from Quraysh who will lead them.[22]

These twelve leaders must be the imams of the Ahl al-Bayt, out of whom the last one will remain living until end of this world. So long as Islam exists, which is until

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Ibn Ḥanbal, Abu Abdillah, *Musnad al-Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, vol. 34, p. 401, no. 20805 and p. 421, no. 20830.

لاَيَزَالُ الدِّينُ قَائِمًا، حَتَّى يَكُونَ اثْنَا عَشَرَ خَلِيفَةً مِنْ قُرَيْشٍ

21. Abū al-Ḥusayn 'Asākir al-Dīn, Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Saḥiḥ Muslim* vol. 3, p. 1452. The original text is as follows:

لاَيَزَالُ أَمْرُ النَّاسِ مَاضِيًا مَا وَلِيَهُمْ اثْنَا عَشَرَ رَجُلا. ثُمَّ تَكَلَّمَ النَّبِيُّ (ص) بِكَلِمَةٍ خَفِيَتْ عَلَيَّ. فَسَأَلْتُ أَبِي: مَا ذَا قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ: (ص)؟ فَقَالَ: كُلُّهُمْ مِنْ قُرَيْشٍ.

22. This hadith is mentioned in Bukhārī, Muhammad b. Ismāeil, *Ṣaḥiḥ al-Bukhārī*, vol. 6, Bāb-u Manāqib-i Quraysh, p. 7, no. 3131 and vol. 11, Bab-u Umarā' min Quraysh, p. 35, no. 6382; Ibn Ḥanbal, Abu Abdillah, *Musnad al-Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, vol. 8, p. 446, no. 4832 and vol. 9, p. 489, no. 5677 and vol. 10, p. 273, no. 6121; Abū al-Ḥusayn 'Asākir al-Dīn, Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥiḥ Muslim* vol. 3, p. 1452, Kitab al-Imarah, no. 1820. The original text is as follows:

لا يَزَالُ هَذَا الأَمْرُ فِي قُرَيْشٍ مَا بَقِيَ مِنَ النَّاسِ اثْنَان

end of time, one of these twelve must be present. Especially bearing in mind the hadiths that say even if there are two people on earth, one is from the Quraysh to lead society. This set of hadiths is sufficient to know who the imams and successors are, and who is qualified to lead the Islamic society.

Nevertheless, some hadiths mention the twelve imams. For example, Prophet Muhammad addressed Jābir ibn Abdullah al-Anṣārī, a companion who lived until the lifetime of the fifth imam, Imam al-Bāqir. As the Prophet listed the imams' names, he reached the name of Imam al-Bāqir, and then told Jābir to convey his salaam to him, which Jābir did.[23] Another example is the well-

23. Ibn Bābiwayh, Muhammad b. Ali, *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni'mah,* vol. 1. pp. 253-254

عَنْ جَابِرِ بْنِ يَزِيدَ الْجُعْفِيِّ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ جَابِرَ بْنَ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ الْأَنْصَارِيَّ يَقُولُ لَمَّا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ عَلَى نَبِيِّهِ مُحَمَّدٍ (ص) يا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَ أَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَ أُولِي الأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ قُلْتُ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ عَرَفْنَا اللَّهَ وَ رَسُولَهُ فَمَنْ أُولُو الأَمْرِ الَّذِينَ قَرَنَ اللَّهُ طَاعَتَهُمْ بِطَاعَتِكَ. فَقَالَ (ص): هُمْ خُلَفَائِي يَا جَابِرُ وَ أَئِمَّةُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ مِنْ بَعْدِي أَوَّلُهُمْ عَلِيُّ بْنُ أَبِي طَالِبٍ ثُمَّ الْحَسَنُ وَ الْحُسَيْنُ ثُمَّ عَلِيُّ بْنُ الْحُسَيْنِ ثُمَّ مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَلِيٍّ الْمَعْرُوفُ فِي التَّوْرَاةِ بِالْبَاقِرِ وَ سَتُدْرِكُهُ يَا جَابِرُ فَإِذَا لَقِيتَهُ فَأَقْرِئْهُ مِنِّي السَّلَامَ ثُمَّ الصَّادِقُ جَعْفَرُ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ ثُمَّ مُوسَى بْنُ جَعْفَرٍ ثُمَّ عَلِيُّ بْنُ مُوسَى ثُمَّ مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَلِيٍّ ثُمَّ عَلِيُّ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ ثُمَّ الْحَسَنُ بْنُ عَلِيٍّ ثُمَّ سَمِيِّي وَ كَنِيِّي حُجَّةُ اللَّهِ فِي أَرْضِهِ وَ بَقِيَّتُهُ فِي عِبَادِهِ ابْنُ الْحَسَنِ بْنِ عَلِيٍّ ذَاكَ الَّذِي يَفْتَحُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى ذِكْرُهُ عَلَى يَدَيْهِ مَشَارِقَ الأَرْضِ وَ مَغَارِبَهَا

ذَاکَ الَّذِی یَغِیبُ عَنْ شِیعَتِهِ وَ أَوْلِیَائِهِ غَیْبَةً لَایَثْبُتُ فِیهَا عَلَی الْقَوْلِ بِإِمَامَتِهِ إِلا مَنِ امْتَحَنَ اللَّهُ قَلْبَهُ لِلإِیمَانِ ... قَالَ جَابِرُ بْنُ یَزِیدَ: فَدَخَلَ جَابِرُ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ الْأَنْصَارِیُّ عَلَی عَلِیِّ بْنِ الْحُسَیْنِ (ع) فَبَیْنَمَا هُوَ یُحَدِّثُهُ إِذْ خَرَجَ مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَلِیٍّ الْبَاقِرُ (ع) مِنْ عِنْدِ نِسَائِهِ وَ عَلَی رَأْسِهِ ذُؤَابَةٌ وَ هُوَ غُلامٌ. فَلَمَّا بَصُرَ بِهِ جَابِرٌ ارْتَعَدَتْ فَرَائِصُهُ وَ قَامَتْ کُلُّ شَعْرَةٍ عَلَی بَدَنِهِ وَ نَظَرَ إِلَیْهِ مَلِیّاً ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُ: یَا غُلامُ أَقْبِلْ. فَأَقْبَلَ. ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُ: أَدْبِرْ فَأَدْبَرَ. فَقَالَ جَابِرُ: شَمَائِلُ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ (ص) وَ رَبِّ الْکَعْبَةِ. ثُمَّ قَامَ فَدَنَا مِنْهُ فَقَالَ: لَهُ مَا اسْمُکَ یَا غُلامُ فَقَالَ: مُحَمَّدٌ. قَالَ: ابْنُ مَنْ؟ قَالَ: ابْنُ عَلِیِّ بْنِ الْحُسَیْنِ. قَالَ: یَا بُنَیَّ فَدَتْکَ نَفْسِی فَأَنْتَ إِذاً الْبَاقِرُ فَقَالَ: نَعَمْ. ثُمَّ قَالَ: فَأَبْلِغْنِی مَا حَمَلَکَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (ص) فَقَالَ جَابِرٌ: یَا مَوْلایَ إِنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ (ص) بَشَّرَنِی بِالْبَقَاءِ إِلَی أَنْ أَلْقَاکَ وَ قَالَ لِی إِذَا لَقِیتَهُ فَأَقْرِئْهُ مِنِّی السَّلامَ فَرَسُولُ اللَّهِ یَا مَوْلایَ یَقْرَأُ عَلَیْکَ السَّلام...

Ibn Bābiwayh, Muhammad b. Ali, in *Amālī (Ṣadūq)*, p. 353 reports the meeting between Jabir and Imam al-Bāqīr:

عَنِ الصَّادِقِ جَعْفَرِ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ (ع) قَالَ: إِنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ (ص) قَالَ ذَاتَ یَوْمٍ لِجَابِرِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ الْأَنْصَارِیِّ: یَا جَابِرُ إِنَّکَ سَتَبْقَی حَتَّی تَلْقَی وَلَدِی مُحَمَّدَ بْنَ عَلِیِّ بْنِ الْحُسَیْنِ بْنِ عَلِیِّ بْنِ أَبِی طَالِبٍ الْمَعْرُوفَ فِی التَّوْرَاةِ بِالْبَاقِرِ فَإِذَا لَقِیتَهُ فَأَقْرِئْهُ مِنِّی السَّلامَ. فَدَخَلَ جَابِرٌ إِلَی عَلِیِّ بْنِ الْحُسَیْنِ (ع) فَوَجَدَ مُحَمَّدَ بْنَ عَلِیٍّ ع عِنْدَهُ غُلاماً فَقَالَ لَهُ: یَا غُلامُ أَقْبِلْ فَأَقْبَلَ ثُمَّ قَالَ: لَهُ أَدْبِرْ فَأَدْبَرَ فَقَالَ جَابِرٌ: شَمَائِلُ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ (ص) وَ رَبِّ الْکَعْبَةِ ثُمَّ أَقْبَلَ عَلَی عَلِیِّ بْنِ الْحُسَیْنِ (ع) فَقَالَ لَهُ: مَنْ هَذَا؟ قَالَ: هَذَا ابْنِی وَ صَاحِبُ الأَمْرِ بَعْدِی مُحَمَّدٌ الْبَاقِرُ. فَقَامَ جَابِرٌ فَوَقَعَ عَلَی قَدَمَیْهِ یُقَبِّلُهُمَا وَ یَقُولُ: نَفْسِی لِنَفْسِکَ الْفِدَاءُ یَا ابْنَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ اقْبَلْ سَلامَ أَبِیکَ إِنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ (ص) یَقْرَأُ عَلَیْکَ السَّلامَ قَالَ فَدَمَعَتْ عَیْنَا أَبِی جَعْفَرٍ (ع) ثُمَّ قَالَ یَا

known, authentic hadith called Hadith of the Tablet (*Lawh*). God had given it to Prophet Muhammad who then gifted it to Lady Fatimah on the birthday of Imam Ḥusayn, and has been mentioned in various books.[24]

جَابِرُ عَلَى أَبِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ (ص) السَّلامُ مَا دَامَتِ السَّمَاوَاتُ وَ الأَرْضُ وَ عَلَيْكَ يَا جَابِرُ بِمَا بَلَّغْتَ السَّلامُ.

Nūr al-Dīn a Sunni scholar in his book, *Tanzih al-Sharī'ah al-Marfū'ah,* vol. 1, p. 415, no. 25 reports this meeting:

أَبِي الزُّبَيْرِ: كُنَّا عِنْدَ جَابِرِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ وَقَدْ كُفَّ بَصَرُهُ وَعَلَتْ سِنُّهُ فَدَخَلَ عَلَيْهِ عَلِيُّ بْنُ الْحُسَيْنِ وَمَعَهُ إِبْنُهُ مُحَمَّدٌ، فَقَالَ لَهُ جَابِرٌ مَنْ هَذَا قَالَ ابْنِي مُحَمَّدٌ فَضَمَّهُ إِلَيْهِ وَبَكَى، وَقَالَ لَهُ يَا مُحَمَّدُ إِن رَسُول الله يَقْرَأُ عَلَيْكَ السَّلام، فَقِيلَ لَهُ وَمَا ذَاكَ؟ قَالَ كُنْتُ عِنْدَ رَسُول الله فَدَخَلَ عَلَيْهِ الْحُسَيْنُ فَضَمَّهُ إِلَيْهِ وَأَقْعَدَهُ إِلَى جَنْبِهِ، ثُمَّ قَالَ: يُولَدُ لابْنِي هَذَا ابْنٌ يُقَالُ لَهُ عَلِيٌّ إِذَا كَانَ يَوْمُ الْقِيَامَةِ نَادَى مُنَادٍ مِنْ بُطْنَانِ الْعَرْشِ أَلا لِيَقُمْ سَيِّدُ الْعَابِدِينَ، فَيَقُومُ هُوَ وَيُولَدُ لَهُ ابْنٌ يُقَالُ لَهُ مُحَمَّدٌ إِذَا رَأَيْتَهُ يَا جَابِرُ فَاقْرَأْ عَلَيْهِ السَّلام. وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّ بَقَاءَكَ بَعْدَ الْيَوْمِ قَلِيلٌ. فَمَا لبث جَابِر بعد ذَلِك إِلا بضعَة عشر يَوْمًا حَتَّى توفّى.

24. For example, Kulaynī, Muhammad, *al-Kāfī,* vol. 1, p. 527; Ibn Bābawayh, Ali b. Ḥusayn, *al-Imāmah wa al-Tabṣirah min al- Ḥayrah*, p. 103; Khaṣībī, Ḥusayn b. Hamdān, *al-Hidāyah al-Kubrā,* p. 364; Mas'ūdī, Ali b. Ḥusayn, *Ithbāt al-Waṣīyyah,* pp. 168-170 and Ibn Abī Zaynab, Muhammad b. Ibrahim, *al-Ghaybah li al-Nu'mānī,* pp. 62-66. A part of the hadith is as follows:

إِنِّي لَمْ أَبْعَثْ نَبِيّاً فَأَكْمَلْتُ أَيَّامَهُ وَ انْقَضَتْ مُدَّتُهُ إِلا جَعَلْتُ لَهُ وَصِيّاً وَ إِنِّي فَضَّلْتُكَ عَلَى الأَنْبِيَاءِ وَ فَضَّلْتُ وَصِيَّكَ عَلَى الأَوْصِيَاءِ وَ أَكْرَمْتُكَ بِشِبْلَيْكَ وَ سِبْطَيْكَ حَسَنٍ وَ حُسَيْنٍ فَجَعَلْتُ حَسَناً مَعْدِنَ عِلْمِي بَعْدَ

It should be noted that non-Shi'a find it difficult to identify the twelve caliphs who ruled after Prophet Muhammad while possessing those qualities. When they list the first twelve caliphs, they are to include people like Yazid ibn Mu'awiyah, and no one agrees that Yazid

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انْقِضَاءِ مُدَّةِ أَبِيهِ وَ جَعَلْتُ حُسَيْناً خَازِنَ وَحْيِي وَ أَكْرَمْتُهُ بِالشَّهَادَةِ وَ خَتَمْتُ لَهُ بِالسَّعَادَةِ فَهُوَ أَفْضَلُ مَنِ اسْتُشْهِدَ وَ أَرْفَعُ الشُّهَدَاءِ دَرَجَةً جَعَلْتُ كَلِمَتِيَ التَّامَّةَ مَعَهُ وَ حُجَّتِيَ الْبَالِغَةَ عِنْدَهُ بِعِتْرَتِهِ أُثِيبُ وَ أُعَاقِبُ أَوَّلُهُمْ عَلِيٌّ سَيِّدُ الْعَابِدِينَ وَ زَيْنُ أَوْلِيَائِيَ الْمَاضِينَ وَ ابْنُهُ شِبْهُ جَدِّهِ الْمَحْمُودِ مُحَمَّدٌ الْبَاقِرُ عِلْمِي وَ الْمَعْدِنُ لِحِكْمَتِي سَيَهْلِكُ الْمُرْتَابُونَ فِي جَعْفَرٍ الرَّادُّ عَلَيْهِ كَالرَّادِّ عَلَيَّ حَقَّ الْقَوْلُ مِنِّي لَأُكْرِمَنَّ مَثْوَى جَعْفَرٍ وَ لَأَسُرَّنَّهُ فِي أَشْيَاعِهِ وَ أَنْصَارِهِ وَ أَوْلِيَائِهِ أُتِيحَتْ بَعْدَهُ مُوسَى فِتْنَةٌ عَمْيَاءُ حِنْدِسٌ- لِأَنَّ خَيْطَ فَرْضِي لَايَنْقَطِعُ وَ حُجَّتِي لَاتَخْفَى وَ أَنَّ أَوْلِيَائِي يُسْقَوْنَ بِالْكَأْسِ الْأَوْفَى مَنْ جَحَدَ وَاحِداً مِنْهُمْ فَقَدْ جَحَدَ نِعْمَتِي وَ مَنْ غَيَّرَ آيَةً مِنْ كِتَابِي فَقَدِ افْتَرَى عَلَيَّ وَيْلٌ لِلْمُفْتَرِينَ الْجَاحِدِينَ عِنْدَ انْقِضَاءِ مُدَّةِ مُوسَى عَبْدِي وَ حَبِيبِي وَ خِيَرَتِي فِي عَلِيٌّ وَلِيِّي وَ نَاصِرِي وَ مَنْ أَضَعُ عَلَيْهِ أَعْبَاءَ النُّبُوَّةِ وَ أَمْتَحِنُهُ بِالاضْطِلَاعِ بِهَا يَقْتُلُهُ عِفْرِيتٌ مُسْتَكْبِرٌ يُدْفَنُ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ الَّتِي بَنَاهَا الْعَبْدُ الصَّالِحُ إِلَى جَنْبِ شَرِّ خَلْقِي حَقَّ الْقَوْلُ مِنِّي لَأُسَرَّنَّهُ بِمُحَمَّدٍ ابْنِهِ وَ خَلِيفَتِهِ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَ وَارِثِ عِلْمِهِ فَهُوَ مَعْدِنُ عِلْمِي وَ مَوْضِعُ سِرِّي وَ حُجَّتِي عَلَى خَلْقِي لَايُؤْمِنُ عَبْدٌ بِهِ إِلا جَعَلْتُ الْجَنَّةَ مَثْوَاهُ وَ شَفَّعْتُهُ فِي سَبْعِينَ مِنْ أَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ كُلُّهُمْ قَدِ اسْتَوْجَبُوا النَّارَ وَ أَخْتِمُ بِالسَّعَادَةِ لِابْنِهِ عَلِيٌّ وَلِيِّي وَ نَاصِرِي وَ الشَّاهِدِ فِي خَلْقِي وَ أَمِينِي عَلَى وَحْيِي أُخْرِجُ مِنْهُ الدَّاعِيَ إِلَى سَبِيلِي وَ الْخَازِنَ لِعِلْمِيَ الْحَسَنَ وَ أُكْمِلُ ذَلِكَ بِابْنِهِ م ح م د رَحْمَةً لِلْعَالَمِينَ عَلَيْهِ كَمَالُ مُوسَى وَ بَهَاءُ عِيسَى وَ صَبْرُ أَيُّوب

brought dignity to Islam. Moreover, there is no distinction between some of those twelve and rulers who came afterwards. Essentially, some of those who came afterwards were more qualified than those such as Yazid and Marwan ibn Hakam.

If they decide to choose, it becomes subjective as people may have different preferences. Additionally, as said before, there is no distinction between whomsoever they choose and others remaining outside.

Some suggested the twelve leaders to have come after [Imam] Mahdi, though this is baseless in the hadith corpus.

Some also suggested that "the Twelve" refers to rulers whom everyone accepts, such as the first four caliphs, namely Mu'awiyah, Yazid, 'Abd al-Malik, and his four sons: al-Walid, Sulayman, Yazid and Hisham and 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz between Sulayman and Yazid. These seven and the four Rightly Guided Caliphs become eleven, and with al-Walid bin Yazid ibn 'Abd al-Malik they are twelve. Again, the question remains as to how one can place the likes of Yazid this list of twelve rulers with the above-mentioned qualities. [25] [26]

25. For example, Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalāni (d. AH 852), in his *Fath al-Bari: Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari* which is considered as one of the best commentaries of *Sahih* of Bukhari, Kitab al-Ahkam, Bab al-Istikhlaf has a critical study of many of such interpretations. Commenting on the hadith that Jabir ibn Samurah heard Prophet Muhammad saying, "There will be twelve leaders (*amir*)" and then he says that the

Prophet said something the he could not hear; his father later told him that the Prophet had said, "They will all be from Quraysh."

26. In his *Yanābi' al-Mawaddah*, vol. 3, pp. 292 & 292, Sulayman ibn Ibrahim al-Qanduzi al-Balhki, a well-known Hanafi scholar (d. AH 1294), writes:

قال بعض المحققين: إنّ الأحاديث الدالة على كون الخلفاء بعده (ص) اثنا عشر قد اشتهرت من طرق كثيرة، فبشرح الزمان و تعريف الكون و المكان، علم أنّ مراد رسول الله (ص) من حديثه هذا الائمة الاثنا عشر من أهل بيته و عترته، إذ لا يمكن أن يحمل هذا الحديث على الخلفاء بعده من أصحابه، لقلتهم عن اثنى عشر، و لا يمكن أن يحمله على الملوک الأموية لزيادتهم على اثنى عشر، و لظلمهم الفاحش إلاّ عمر بن عبد العزيز، و لكونهم غير بنى هاشم، لأنّ النبى (ص) قال «كلّهم من بنى هاشم» فى رواية عبد الملک عن جابر، و إخفاء صوته (ص) فى هذا القول يرجح هذه الرواية؛ لأنّهم لا يحسنون خلافة بنى هاشم و لايمكن أن حمله على الملوک العباسية لزيادتهم على العدد المذكور، و لقلّة رعايتهم الآية قُلْ لاَ أَسْئَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْراً إِلاَّ ٱلْمَوَدَّةَ فِى ٱلْقُرْبىَ و حديث الكساء، فلا بد من أن يحمل هذا الحديث على الأئمة الاثنى عشر من أهل بيته و عترته (ص) لأنّهم كانوا أعلم أهل زمانهم و أجلّهم و أورعهم و أتقاهم، و أعلاهم نسبا، و أفضلهم حسبا، و أكرمهم عند الله، و كان علومهم عن آبائهم متصلا بجدّهم (ص) و بالوراثة و اللدنية، كذا عرفهم أهل العلم و التحقيق و أهل الكشف و التوفيق. و يؤيد هذا المعنى أى أن مراد النبى (ص) الأئمة الاثنا عشر من أهل بيته و يشهده و يرجحه حديث الثقلين، و الأحاديث المتكثرة المذكورة فى هذا الكتاب و غيرها.

و أمّا قوله صلّى اللّه عليه و آله و سلّم: «كلّهم تجتمع عليه الأمة» فى رواية عن جابر بن سمرة فمراده صلّى اللّه عليه و آله و سلّم أنّ الأمّة تجتمع على الاقرار بامامة كلّهم وقت ظهور قائمهم المهدى (رضى اللّه عنهم).

Chapter 3

The Authority of the Ahl al-Bayt

There is consensus among Muslims regarding the validity of referring to the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt in understanding Islam. This includes Sunni Muslims, who consider the companions of the Prophet as reliable sources in understanding Islamic doctrines and practices. Not only did Imam Ali, Lady Fatimah, Imam Ḥasan, and Imam Ḥusayn hold a close relationship to the Prophet, but their teachings were firmly based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, [1] and they possessed impeccable traits that qualified them as leaders.

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1. This is a crucial point: All traditions of the imams were received directly from the Prophet. The imams did not teach Islam based on their own opinions. Many traditions state that what they uttered was exactly what they had received from the Prophet. For example, in a hadith in *al-Kāfi*, vol. 1, p. 53, Imam al-Ṣādiq proclaimed that whatever he said was received through his forefathers from the Prophet:

The authority of the Ahl al-Bayt is studied on two levels: (1) The permissibility of referring to them as a reliable source in understanding Islam. Were they sound proofs (*hujjah*) for understanding Islam? (2) The necessity of referring to the Ahl al-Bayt because of their reliability.

حَدِيثِي حَدِيثُ أَبِي وَ حَدِيثُ أَبِي حَدِيثُ جَدِّي وَ حَدِيثُ جَدِّي حَدِيثُ الْحُسَيْنِ وَ حَدِيثُ الْحُسَيْنِ حَدِيثُ الْحَسَنِ وَ حَدِيثُ الْحَسَنِ حَدِيثُ أَمِيرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (ع) وَ حَدِيثُ أَمِيرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ حَدِيثُ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ (ص) وَ حَدِيثُ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ قَوْلُ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ.

Elsewhere, the Imam says that whatever they say is from the Prophet:

سَأَلَ رَجُلٌ أَبَا عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (ع) عَنْ مَسْأَلَةٍ فَأَجَابَهُ فِيهَا فَقَالَ الرَّجُلُ إِنْ كَانَ كَذَا وَ كَذَا مَا كَانَ الْقَوْلُ فِيهَا فَقَالَ: لَهُ مَهْمَا أَجَبْتُكَ فِيهِ لِشَيْءٍ فَهُوَ عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ (ص). لَسْنَا نَقُولُ بِرَأْيِنَا مِنْ شَيْءٍ.

Şaffār, Muhammad b. Ḥasan, *Baṣā'ir al-Darajāt fi Faḍa'il Al Muhammad,* vol. 1, pp. 300-301.

In another hadith mentioned in *Wasā'il al-Shī'ah* by Ḥurr 'Āmilī, Muhammad b. Ḥasan, vol. 27, p. 97, no. 33311, Imam al-Ṣādiq proclaimed that whatever he said was what he had received from God through his father, the Prophet, and Gabriel. The original text is as follows:

عَنْ جَابِرٍ قَالَ: قُلْتُ لِأَبِي جَعْفَرٍ (ع) إِذَا حَدَّثْتَنِي بِحَدِيثٍ فَأَسْنِدْهُ لِي. فَقَالَ: حَدَّثَنِي أَبِي عَنْ جَدِّي عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ (ص) عَنْ جَبْرَئِيلَ عَنِ اللَّهِ تَبَارَكَ وَ تَعَالَى وَ كُلُّ مَا أُحَدِّثُكَ بِهَذَا الإِسْنَادِ.

The permissibility of referring to the Ahl al-Bayt

According to the Sunni school of thought, all companions of the Prophet were proofs (*hujjah*).[2] However, the term *companion* (*ṣaḥābī*) is defined quite broadly: a believer who met the Prophet at least once.[3] A

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2. For example, Ibn Qayyim al-Jūzīyyah in his *I'lām al-Muwaqqi'īn,* vol. 2, p. 186, says:

وَأَكْثَرُ الْعُلَمَاءِ بَلْ الَّذِي نَصَّ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ قَلَّدْتُمُوهُ أَنَّ أَقْوَالَ الصَّحَابَةِ حُجَّةٌ: يَجِبُ اتِّبَاعُهَا، وَيَحْرُمُ الْخُرُوجُ مِنْهَا كَمَا سَيَأْتِي حِكَايَةُ أَلْفَاظِ الْأَئِمَّةِ فِي ذَلِكَ، وَأَبْلَغُهُمْ فِيهِ الشَّافِعِيُّ، وَتَبَيَّنُ أَنَّهُ لَمْ يَخْتَلِفْ مَذْهَبُهُ أَنَّ قَوْلَ الصَّحَابِيِّ حُجَّةٌ

Shāṭibī also in his *al-Muwāfaqāt*, vol. 4, pp. 446-451, says:

سنة الصحابة رضى الله عنهم سنة يعمل عليها و يرجع اليها، و من الدليل عليها امورٌ ... فيصح أن يطلق على الصحابة أنهم خير أمة باطلاق، و أنهم وسط -اى عدول- باطلاق، و إذ كان كذلك، فقولهم معتبر و عملهم مقتدى به

3. The major belief among Sunni Muslims is that whoever met the Prophet for even one session while believing in him is considered a companion of the Prophet and can be relied on in acquiring knowledge about Islam. For example, Bukhārī in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī,* vol. 6, Bab-un fī Ta'rīf al-Ṣaḥabī, p. 74, says:

مَنْ صَحِبَ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَوْ رَآهُ مِنْ الْمُسْلِمِينَ فَهُوَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِهِ

In defining "companion", 'Asqalānī in *al-Iṣābah fī Tamyīz al-Ṣaḥābah,* vol. 1, p. 158, says:

mere five-minute meeting with the Prophet while having faith in him guaranteed his companionship, rendering all Muslims who performed the pilgrimage (hajj), lived in, and travelled to, Medina, or met the Prophet by chance as his companions.

In Shi'a Islam, a companion of the Prophet believed in him and his message and lived with him for a considerable period, rather than a mere hour or two. Indeed, the Arabic term *saḥābī* refers to a relation that endured over a reasonably long period of time.[4]

It seems unlikely that a strong relationship with the Prophet can occur within a short period, as the development of true friendship naturally occurs over a longer one. And as verified in the Qur'an, it is not certain that those who labelled themselves Muslims who lived with the Prophet were all true Muslims who believed in him; indeed, some troubled him while claiming to follow him. The Qur'an mentions those who built a mosque

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وأصحّ ما وقفت عليه من ذلک [أن] الصحابيّ: من لقى النبيّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلَّم، مؤمنا به، ومات على الإسلام، فيدخل فيمن لقيه من طالت مجالسته له أو قصرت، ومن روى عنه أو لم يرو، ومن غزا معه أو لم يغز، ومن رآه رؤية ولو لم يجالسه، ومن لم يره لعارض كالعمى.

Accordingly, members of the Household of the Prophet, that is Imam Ali, Lady Fatimah, Imam al-Ḥasan and Imam al-Ḥusayn who have always been with the Prophet and had the closest relation to the Prophet are unquestionable and reliable sources.

4. 'Askarī, Sayyed al-Murtaḍā, *Ma'ālim al-Madrasatayn,* vol. 1, p. 88

with the intention of harming Islam, and those who even attempted to assassinate the Prophet:

وَ الَّذينَ اتَّخَذُوا مَسْجِداً ضِراراً وَ كُفْراً وَ تَفْريقاً بَيْنَ الْمُؤْمِنينَ وَ إِرْصاداً لِمَنْ حارَبَ اللَّهَ وَ رَسُولَهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَ لَيَحْلِفُنَّ إِنْ أَرَدْنا إِلاَّ الْحُسْنى وَ اللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ إِنَّهُمْ لَكاذِبُونَ

And those who built a masjid to cause harm and for unbelief and to cause disunion among the believers and an ambush to him who made war against Allah and His Messenger before and they will certainly swear: We did not desire aught but good and Allah bears witness that they are most surely liars. (9:107)

Living with the Prophet and declaring submission to him did not guarantee his or her reliability, although there were true companions who fully submitted to Islam and loved the Prophet. Many conflicts arose amongst the companions after the demise of Prophet; there were caliphs who accused, harassed, or even killed one another. Nonetheless, since Sunnis believed that all the companions were reliable, sound, and just, they cannot dispute the authority of the Ahl al-Bayt as reliable sources in both theory and practice. Even if it is sometimes disputed in practice, it is accepted at least in theory.

The reason for following the Ahl al-Bayt becomes clearer when we examine the sayings of Sunni scholars refer to their traditions regarding the knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt. For example, 'Umar ibn Khaṭṭāb, the second caliph, during various decision-making moments said:

If Ali were not there, 'Umar would have been destroyed.[5]

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5. For a detailed list of Sunni sources, in which this saying is reported, see e.g. Shīrāzī, Sultān al-Wā'izīn, Muhammad, *Shabhāy-e Pīshāwar*, pp. 409-412.

For example, the great theologian al-Ganjī al-Shāfi'ī, in Chapter 57, pp. 218-219 of his *Kifāyah al-Ṭālib fī Manāqib Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib*, after narrating several authentic hadiths, reports from Ḥudhaifah ibn Yamān: "One day 'Umar met him and asked him, 'What was your condition when you awoke in the morning?' Ḥudhaifah said, 'I rose in the morning hating the Truth, liking *fitnah*, bearing witness to the thing unseen; learning by heart the uncreated, performing *ṣalāh* (which usually refers to ritual prayers) without ablution and knowing that, what is for me on the earth is not for Allah in the Sky.' 'Umar was infuriated by these remarks and intended to punish Ḥudhaifah when Ali came in. He noticed the signs of rage on 'Umar's face and asked why he was so angry. 'Umar told him, and Ali said, "There is nothing serious about this remark; what Ḥudhaifah said was correct. Truth means death, which he detests; fitnah means wealth and children, which he likes; and when he says he bears witness to what he has not seen, this means that he testifies to the oneness of God, death, the Day of Judgement, Paradise, Hell, the bridge over it (called Ṣirāt), none of which he has seen. When he says he learns by heart what is uncreated, this refers to the Holy Qur'an; when he says that he performs *ṣalāh* without ablution, this refers to reciting salutations on the Prophet of God, which is permissible without ablution; when he says he has for himself on earth what is not for Allah in the sky, this refers to his wife, as He has no wife or children." 'Umar then said:

كادَ يهلک ابن الخطاب لولا علی بن ابی طالب

Had Ali not been there, 'Umar would have been very close to getting destroyed.

Sheikh Sulaymān b. Ibrāhīm al-Qundūzī in *Yanābi' al-Mawaddah*, al-Bab al-Rabi' 'Ashar, vol. 1, p. 83, records a detailed report from Ibn Abbas, at the end of which he says:

Regarding Imam al-Ṣādiq , Abū Ḥanīfah is quoted as saying:

و لهذا كانت الصحابة (رضى اللّه عنهم) يرجعون إليه فى أحكام الكتاب، و يأخذون عنه الفتاوى .كما قال عمر بن الخطاب (رضى اللّه عنه) فى عدّة مواطن: لولا على لهلک عمر و قال صلّى اللّه عليه و آله و سلّم: أعلم أمتى على بن أبى طالب.

That is why the companions of the Prophet used to seek religious judgments (*fatawa*) from Ali, and they accepted his decisions. Thus, 'Umar ibn Khaṭṭāb said on various occasions, 'If it were not for Ali, 'Umar would have been ruined' and the Prophet said, 'The most knowledgeable person in my nation is Ali ibn Abī Tālib.'

Muhammad b. Ṭalḥah al-Naṣībī al-Shāfi'ī in his *Maṭālib al-Su'ūl,* p. 120, and Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī in the third chapter of *Ṣawā'iq al-Muḥriqah*, vol. 2, p. 371 reporting from Sa'eid b. Musayyib, quote 'Umar as saying:

كان عمر يتعوذ باللّه من معضلة ليس لها أبوالحسن

'Umar used to say that I seek God's help in deciding those difficult problems for which Abu al-Ḥasan [Ali] is not available.

Elsewhere, in the same book, *Maṭālib al-Su'ūl,* pp. 70-71 al-Shāfi'ī mentions an incident in which after Imam Ali corrects 'Umar's decision regarding a pregnant woman who had committed adultery. 'Umar said:

لو لا على لهلک عمر

Had Ali not been there, Umar would have been ruined.

> I have not seen anyone more knowledgeable than Ja'far b. Muhammad.[6]

On those who narrated from Imam al-Ṣldiq, Shaykh al-Mufid asserts that those who were trustworthy among them from different schools of thought numbered 4,000.[7]

Al-Dhahabī mentions by name some well-known narrators from Imam al-Ṣldiq such as Abū Ḥanīfah, Yaḥyā ibn Sa'īd Anṣārī, Abān ibn Taghlib, Mu'āwīyah ibn 'Ammār, Ibn Isḥāq, Sufyān, Shu'bah, Mālik, and Wahab ibn Khālid.[8]

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6. Dhahabī, Muhammad b. Aḥmad, *Siyr A'lām al-Nubalā',* vo. 6, p. 257: Ibid, *Tadhkirah al-Huffāẓ,* vol. 1, p. 166, no. 162. The original text is as follows:

ما رأيتُ أحداً أفقهَ من جعفر بن محمد

7. Mufīd, Muhammad b. Muhammad, *al-Irshād,* vol. 2, p. 179. The original text is as follows:

وَ كَانَ الصَّادِقُ جَعْفَرُ بْنُ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عَلِيِّ بْنِ الْحُسَيْنِ (ع) مِنْ بَيْنِ إِخْوَتِهِ خَلِيفَةَ أَبِيهِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عَلِيٍّ (ع) وَ وَصِيَّهُ وَ الْقَائِمَ بِالإِمَامَةِ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَ بَرَزَ عَلَى جَمَاعَتِهِمْ بِالْفَضْلِ وَ كَانَ أَنْبَهَهُمْ ذِكْراً وَ أَعْظَمَهُمْ قَدْراً وَ أَجَلَّهُمْ فِي الْعَامَّةِ وَ الْخَاصَّةِ وَ نَقَلَ النَّاسُ عَنْهُ مِنَ الْعُلُومِ مَا سَارَتْ بِهِ الرُّكْبَانُ وَ انْتَشَرَ ذِكْرُهُ فِي الْبُلْدَانِ وَ لَمْ يُنْقَلْ عَنْ أَحَدٍ مِنْ أَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ الْعُلَمَاءِ مَا نُقِلَ عَنْهُ وَ لاَلْقِيَ أَحَدٌ مِنْهُمْ مِنْ أَهْلِ الآثَارِ وَ نَقَلَةِ الأَخْبَارِ وَ لاَنَقَلُوا عَنْهُمْ كَمَا نَقَلُوا عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (ع) فَإِنَّ أَصْحَابَ الْحَدِيثِ قَدْ جَمَعُوا أَسْمَاءَ الرُّوَاةِ عَنْهُ مِنَ الثِّقَاتِ عَلَى اخْتِلاَفِهِمْ فِي الآرَاءِ وَ الْمَقَالاتِ فَكَانُوا أَرْبَعَةَ آلاَفِ رَجُلٍ.

8. Dhahabī, Shams al-Dīn Muhammad b. Aḥmad, *Siyr A'lām al-Nubalā',* vol. 6, no. 117, p. 256. The original text is as follows:

There is no ambiguity in these statements, which is why many Sunni scholars clearly asserted that every Muslim is permitted to act according to one of the five Islamic schools of jurisprudence (*fiqh*): Ja'farī, Ḥanafī, Ḥanbalī, Mālikī, and Shafi'ī. [9]

حَدَّثَ عَنْهُ: ابْنُهُ: مُوسَى الكَاظِمُ، وَيَحْيَى بنُ سَعِيْدٍ الأَنْصَارِيُّ، وَيَزِيْدُ بنُ عَبْدِ اللهِ بنِ الهَادِ - وَهُمَا أَكْبَرُ مِنْهُ - وَأَبُو حَنِيْفَةَ، وَأَبَانُ بنُ تَغْلِبَ، وَابْنُ جُرَيْجٍ، وَمُعَاوِيَةُ بنُ عَمَّارٍ الدُّهْنِيُّ، وَابْنُ إِسْحَاقَ - فِي طَائِفَةٍ مِنْ أَقْرَانِهِ - وَسُفْيَانُ، وَشُعْبَةُ، وَمَالِكٌ، وَإِسْمَاعِيْلُ بنُ جَعْفَرٍ، وَوَهْبُ بنُ خَالِدٍ، وَحَاتِمُ بنُ إِسْمَاعِيْلَ، وَسُلَيْمَانُ بنُ بِلاَلٍ، وَسُفْيَانُ بنُ عُيَيْنَةَ، وَالحَسَنُ بنُ صَالِحٍ، وَالحَسَنُ بنُ عَيَّاشٍ - أَخُو أَبِي بَكْرٍ - وَزُهَيْرُ بنُ مُحَمَّدٍ، وَحَفْصُ بنُ غِيَاثٍ، وَزَيْدُ بنُ حَسَنٍ الأَنْمَاطِيُّ، وَسَعِيْدُ بنُ سُفْيَانَ الأَسْلَمِيُّ، وَعَبْدُ اللهِ بنُ مَيْمُوْنٍ، وَعَبْدُ العَزِيْزِ بنُ عِمْرَانَ الزُّهْرِيُّ، وَعَبْدُ العَزِيْزِ الدَّرَاوَرْدِيُّ، وَعَبْدُ الوَهَّابِ الثَّقَفِيُّ، وَعُثْمَانُ بنُ فَرْقَدٍ، وَمُحَمَّدُ بنُ ثَابِتٍ البُنَانِيُّ، وَمُحَمَّدُ بنُ مَيْمُوْنٍ الزَّعْفَرَانِيُّ، وَمُسْلِمٌ الزَّنْجِيُّ، وَيَحْيَى القَطَّانُ، وَأَبُو عَاصِمٍ النَّبِيْلُ، وَآخَرُوْنَ.

9. Based on the fatwas provided by these great scholars (including Shaykh al-Azhar, Ayatollah Sīstānī, and Sheikh Qaraḍāwī), in July 2005 CE, H.M. King Abdullah II convened an international Islamic conference of 200 of the world's leading Islamic scholars ('ulama) from 50 countries. In Amman, the scholars unanimously issued a ruling on three fundamental issues (which became known as the 'Three Points of the Amman Message'):

> 1. They specifically recognized the validity of all eight *Mathhabs* (legal schools) of Sunni, Shi'a and *Ibaḍi* Islam; of traditional Islamic Theology (Ash'arism); of Islamic Mysticism (Sufism), and of true *Salafi* thought, and came to a precise definition of a 'Muslim'.

The reason is that even if Imam al-Ṣadiq and other members of the Ahl al-Bayt did not possess more knowledge or better access to the knowledge of the Prophet than others, they must have held at least an equal level to others. Educated and truth-seeking people are expected, therefore, to examine all Islamic sources available to determine the ways Muslims can lead exemplary lives, and one rich source is the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt.

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2. Based upon this definition, they forbade *takfir* (declarations of apostasy) between Muslims.

3. Acknowledgement of the schools of Islamic jurisprudence (Mathahib) within Islam means adhering to a fundamental methodology in the issuance of fatwas: no one may issue a fatwa without the requisite personal qualifications which each school of Islamic jurisprudence determines [for its own adherents]. No one may issue a fatwa without adhering to the methodology of the schools of Islamic jurisprudence. No one may claim to do unlimited Ijtihad and create a new school of Islamic jurisprudence or to issue unacceptable fatwas that take Muslims out of the principles and certainties of the Shari`ah and what has been established in respect of its schools of jurisprudence.

For more information, refer to: www.ammanmessage.com, the official website of the Amman Message.

The necessity of referring to the Ahl al-Bayt

Is it necessary to refer to the Ahl al-Bayt to understand Islam, or is it a mere option? The following well-known hadiths indicate its necessity:

Hadith of Thaqalayn

The Hadith of Thaqalayn is an indisputable and well-established hadith narrated in different versions by all Islamic schools of thought.[10] It was uttered by the

10. In the mid-1900s, Grand Ayatullāh Borūjerdī and the Shaykh of al-Azhar University of Cairo, Mahmud Shaltūt, established a Shi'a-Sunni journal (for *Dār al-Taghrīb Bayn al-Madhāhib al-Islāmīyyah* called *Risālah al-Islam* published in Cairo). In the first issue of this journal, an article by a Sunni scholar was published in which the author used the hadith "I left you the Thaqalayn: The Book of God and my *sunnah*" instead of *'itratī* (my progeny) which is narrated by all Muslims. Upon reading the article, Ayatullah Borūjerdī asked a scholar in Qum to collect all Sunni references for "the book of God and my progeny *('itratī)*" and this resulted in a booklet containing 200 Sunni sources. Ayatullah Borūjerdī then sent this to the scholars at al-Azhar who published it.

Assuming "the Book of Allah and my *sunnah*" is accepted, which is narrated by only a few Sunni scholars, it is not problematic; at best, it can be taken on par with "the Book of Allah and my household." And since the Prophet never speaks in vain nor did he contradict himself, the overall result would be that we need to refer to the Book of Allah as well as the *Sunnah* of the Prophet in the way the household of the Prophet reported it to us. If the Prophet in many cases said "*Kitāballāh wa 'Itratī*" and in some cases "*Kitāballāh wa Sunnatī.*" *Kitāballāh* is in both hadiths, so *sunnah* and *'itrah* of the Prophet must be harmonious as well. To understand the true *sunnah,* one must refer to the *Ahl al-Bayt.*

Prophet on several occasions, including the Day of 'Arafah in his last pilgrimage and the 18th of Dhi al-Ḥijjah at the location called Ghadīr Khumm. Despite minor differences in the wording, the content is similar across all versions:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنِّی تَارِکٌ فِیکُمُ الثَّقَلَیْنِ أَمَا إِنْ تَمَسَّکْتُمْ بِهِمَا لَنْ تَضِلُّوا: کِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَ عِتْرَتِی أَهْلَ بَیْتِی

O People! I leave among you two precious things: The Book of God and my Household. As long as you hold on to them, you will not go astray.[11]

In another version, the Prophet ordered a similar command:

و أنا تارک فیکم الثقلین- ما إن تمسکتم بهما لن تضلّوا بعدی- أحدهما أعظم من الآخر: کتاب اللّه، حبل ممدود من السماء إلی الأرض، و عترتی أهل بیتی و لن یفترقا حتّی یردا علیّ الحوض فانظروا کیف تخلفونی فیهما

I leave among you two precious things. If you hold on to them, you will not go astray after me: The book of God, which is like a rope extended between the heaven and the earth, and my household. These two will not separate from each other until they reach me near the

11. Ṣaffār, Muhammad b. Ḥasan, *Baṣā'ir al-Darajāt fi Faḍā'il Āl-i Muhammad,* vol. 1, p. 413.

> Fountain of *Kawthar* on the Day of Judgment.
> Be careful as to how you treat them after me.[12]

Requesting people to be cautious indicated the Prophet's concern as to how the Muslims, or at least some of them, would treat the Qur'an and his Household after his demise.

We can better understand the subject of a ruling by its predicate, since the predicate clarifies the subject. If the Ahl al-Bayt are a) those whom never separate from the Qur'an, and b) those whom we should appeal to in addition to the Qur'an, it is easy to understand that the members of the Ahl al-Bayt must be exceptional people who possess a high moral, spiritual, and intellectual status amid a select group of the Prophet's relatives; of course, with unbeliever relatives, such as Abu Lahab, who are excluded. The expression Ahl al-Bayt may be broad in its scope in its literal sense, but we are looking for people among the relatives of the Prophet who can satisfy the criteria—that is, constantly accompanying and accurately living by the Qur'an. The following points can be inferred from the Hadith of Thaqalayn:

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12. Ṭabarī, Abū Ja'far Muhammad b. Jarīr, *Dalā'il al-Imāmah*, p. 20. For Sunni sources, one may refer to Abū al-Ḥusayn 'Asākir al-Dīn, Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, vol. 4, p. 1873, no. 2408; Ibn Ḥanbal, Abu Abdillah, *Musnad al-Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, vol. 17, p. 169-170, no. 11104; Dārimī, 'Abdullah b. al-Raḥmān, *Musnad Dārimī (Sunan Dārimī)*, vol. 4, p. 2090, no. 3359; al-Tirmidhī, Muhammad b. 'Isā, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, vol. 5, p. 479, no. 3788.

- *The Qur'an and the Ahl al-Bayt will always be together from the time of the Prophet until the end of the world.* Both the Qur'an and the Ahl al-Bayt must be available to refer to; neither the Qur'an nor the Ahl al-Bayt will ever be missing. Since the Qur'an is preserved by God until the end of the world, the Ahl al-Bayt must have also been given continuity by God. For this reason, there must be a living member of the Ahl al-Bayt on this earth. People are to appeal to both to never go astray until they meet the Prophet near the Fountain of *Kawthar.*

- *The Qur'an must have an interpreter who can speak on its behalf.* The Prophet was the first to teach it with esoteric knowledge of the accurate interpretation, and then handed this task over to the Ahl al-Bayt. In addition to teaching the people, they also clarify disagreements, particularly given the debates[13] of the seventy-three Muslims sects the Prophet predicted would come about after his demise.[14]

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13. For example, in a dispute about the visibility of God, the Ash'arites believed it is possible to see God with the physical eye. And they argued from the verse of the Qur'an that states, "*(Some) faces on that day shall be bright Looking to their Lord*" (75:22-23). The Shi'a and Mu'tazilites who disagree with the Ash'arites argued from the Qur'an as well. Ash'arites are followers of a theology founded by Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'ari in the mid-900s.

14. Ibn Mājah, Muhammad b. Yazīd, *Sunan Ibn Mājah,* vol. 5, p. 471, no. 3991; Abū Dāwūd, Sulaymān b. Ash'ath, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, vol. 4,

- *The Ahl al-Bayt are infallible.* The very statement that the Ahl al-Bayt and the Qur'an are two entities that will never separate from each other verify the infallibility of the Ahl al-Bayt. Had they committed sins and mistakes, they would have become separate from the Qur'an. Is it wise of the Prophet to ask us to appeal to a perfect Qur'an while simultaneously follow those who may sin and have faults? We can appeal to the Ahl al-Bayt because they will never go astray; hence, we will be saved by following them. They must always be in line with the Qur'an, and since the Qur'an is the truth, the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt must also be true.

Hadith of Safīnah

Narrated by both Shi'a and Sunni Muslims, the Prophet likened his household to the ship or ark (*safīnah*) of Prophet Noah:

> مثل اهل بيتى مثل سفينة نوح من ركبها نجا و من تخلف عنها غرق
>
> The parable of my household among you is like the ship of Noah: Whoever embarked it

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p. 1969, no. 4596; Tirmidhī, Muhammad b. 'Isā, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, vol. 4, p. 450, no. 2640. The original text is as follows:

تَفَرَّقَتْ الْيَهُودُ عَلَى إِحْدَى وَ سَبْعِينَ أَوْ اثْنَتَيْنِ وَ سَبْعِينَ فِرْقَةً، وَ النَّصَارَى مِثْلَ ذَلِكَ، وَ تَفْتَرِقُ أُمَّتِي عَلَى ثَلاثٍ وَ سَبْعِينَ فِرْقَةً.

was saved, and whoever refused was drowned.[15]

This hadith is in harmony with Hadith of Thaqalayn, since the Ahl al-Bayt are the ones to be followed and obeyed after the Prophet. Whoever refuses to appeal to the Ahl al-Bayt is spiritually destroyed as it is hopeless to be alive without following a leader who guides.

Choosing or refusing to embark on the ship directly refers to spiritual guidance versus doom. According to the Qur'an, people have two lives: the physical life, examined through medical tests, and the spiritual life, the life of guidance and faith.[16] A life without faith results in spiritual death, causing deafness, dumbness, and blindness: "*Deaf, dumb, and blind, they will not come back*" (2:18). Thus, the Hadith of Safīnah indicates that in the absence of the Prophet, Muslims must refer to the Ahl al-

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15. Ḥimyarī, Abdullah b. Ja'far, *Qurb al-Isnād*, al-Muqaddimah, p. 8 and Ibn Bābiwayh, Muhammad b. Ali, *Amāli (Ṣadūq)*, p. 269.

For Sunni sources one may refer to a source in al-Ṭabarī, Ahmad b. Abdullah, *Dhakhā'ir al-'Uqbā*, p. 20:

مثل اهل بيتى كمثل سفينة نوح من ركبها نجا ومن تعلق بها فاز ومن تخلف عنها غرق

or Haythamī al-Makkī, Ibn Ḥajar, *Ṣawā'iq al-Muḥriqah*, vol. 2, p. 445.

16. For example, the Qur'an says:

يَاأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ اسْتَجِيبُواْ لِلَّهِ وَ لِلرَّسُولِ إِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يحُيِيكُم

O you who have faith! Answer God and the Apostle when he summons you to that which will give you life. (8:24)

Bayt to seek guidance, otherwise they are at spiritual loss or even headed towards their downfall.

The Gate of Ḥiṭṭah (Repentance)

The Prophet also likened his household to the Gate of *Ḥiṭṭah* in which God asked the Israelites to enter:

إِنَّمَا مَثَلُ أَهْلِ بَيْتِي فِيكُمْ كَمَثَلِ سَفِينَةِ نُوحٍ، مَنْ رَكِبَهَا نَجَا، وَ مَنْ تَخَلَّفَ عَنْهَا غَرِقَ، وَ مَثَلِ بَابِ حِطَّةٍ مَنْ دَخَلَهُ نَجَا وَ مَنْ لَمْ يَدْخُلْهُ هَلَكَ

> The parable of my household among you is like the ship of Noah: Whoever embarked on it was saved, and whoever refused was drowned and like the Gate of Ḥiṭṭah [of the Bani Israel]. Whoever entered that door attained salvation, and those who refused were destroyed.[17]

The verses related to this hadith read:

وَ إِذْ قُلْنَا ادْخُلُواْ هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةَ فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمْ رَغَدًا وَ ادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّداً وَ قُولُوا حِطَّةٌ نَّغْفِرْ لَكُمْ خَطَايَاكُمْ وَ سَنَزِيدُ الْمُحْسِنِين

> *And when We said, 'Enter this town, and eat thereof freely whencesoever you wish, and enter prostrating at the gate, and say, 'Relieve [us of the burden of our*

17. Ṭūsī, Muhammad b. al-Ḥasan, *Amālī,* p. 60

sins],' that We may forgive your iniquities, and soon We will enhance the virtuous." (2:58)

وَ إِذْ قِيلَ لَهُمُ اسْكُنُوا هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةَ وَ كُلُوا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمْ وَ قُولُوا حِطَّةٌ وَ ادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا نَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ خطيتاكم سَنَزِيدُ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

And when they were told, "Settle in this town and eat thereof whence you wish; and say, 'Relieve [us of the burden of our sins],' and enter prostrating at the gate, that We may forgive your iniquities, and soon We shall enhance the virtuous." (7:161)

Whoever entered the gate was forgiven, and whoever refused was punished. Similarly, those who follow the Ahl al-Bayt receive God's mercy and forgiveness, and those who arrogantly refuse are punishable. This hadith is also found in Sunni sources.[18]

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18. In some Sunni sources, the hadith likens the Ahl al-Bayt to the Gate of *Ḥiṭṭah* such as al-Ṭabarānī, Abū al-Qāsim Sulaymān b. Aḥmad, *al-Mu'jam al-Awsaṭ*, vol. 4, p. 10, no. 3478:

مَثَلُ أَهْلِ بَيْتِي فِيكُمْ كَمَثَلِ سَفِينَةِ نُوحٍ فِي قَوْمِ نُوحٍ، مَنْ رَكِبَهَا نَجَا، وَمَنْ تَخَلَّفَ عَنْهَا هَلَكَ، وَمَثَلُ بَابِ حِطَّةٍ فِي بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ

In some others, it adds that whoever enters it will be forgiven. For example, see Haythamī al-Makkī, Ibn Hajar, *Ṣawā'iq al- Muḥriqah*, vol. 2, p. 445-446 and al-Haythamī, Ali b. Abū Bakr, *Majma' al-Zawā'id wa Manba' al-Fawā'id,* vol. 9, p. 168, no. 14981 and Ḥasanī Shajarī Jurjanī, Yahyā b. Ḥusayn b. Ismāeil b. Zaid, *Tartīb al-Amālī al-Khamīsiyyah li al-Shajarī,* vol. 1, p. 199, no. 737:

Comparable to the Stars

In this hadith, the Prophet likens his household to stars:

عَنِ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: النُّجُومُ أَمَانٌ لأَهْلِ الأَرْضِ مِنَ الْغَرَقِ، وَأَهْلُ بَيْتِي أَمَانٌ لأُمَّتِي مِنَ الاخْتِلافِ، فَإِذَا خَالَفَتْهَا قَبِيلَةٌ مِنَ الْعَرَبِ اخْتَلَفُوا فَصَارُوا حِزْبَ إِبْلِيسَ

> The stars help prevent the inhabitants of the earth from being drowned, and my Ahl al-Bayt are the protectors of my community against disputes (in religious matters). Therefore, whichever Arab group opposes my Ahl al-Bayt shall be split up by dissensions and will become a party of Satan.[19]

إِنَّمَا مَثَلُ أَهْلِ بَيْتِي فِيكُمْ كَمَثَلِ سَفِينَةِ نُوحٍ ; مَنْ رَكِبَهَا نَجَا، وَمَنْ تَخَلَّفَ عَنْهَا غَرِقَ، وَإِنَّمَا مَثَلُ أَهْلِ بَيْتِي فِيكُمْ مَثَلُ بَابِ حِطَّةٍ فِي إِسْرَائِيلَ; مَنْ دَخَلَهُ غُفِرَ لَهُ.

19. Naysabūrī, Abū Abdillah al-Hākim, *al-Mustadrak 'ala al-Ṣaḥiḥayn,* vol. 3, p. 162, Kitab-u Ma'rifah al-Ṣaḥabah, no. 4715. Al-Hākim quotes this hadith from ibn Abbas and Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī in *Ṣawā'iq al-Muḥriqah,* vol. 2, p. 546 quotes it from Salmah b. al-Akwa':

عَن سَلمَة بن الأكْوَع أن النَّبِي صلى الله عَلَيْهِ وَسلم قَالَ: النُّجُوم أَمَان لأهل السَّمَاء وَأهل بَيْتِي أَمَان لأمتي

> The stars protect the inhabitants of the sky, and my household protect my Ummah.

For more Sunni sources, one may refer to al-Ṭabarī, Aḥmad b. Abdullah, *Dhakhā'ir al-'Uqbā,* p. 17; Ibn Ḥanbal, Abu Abdillah, *Faḍā'il al-Ṣaḥābah,* vol. 2, p, 671, no. 1145. For a Shi'a source, one

This hadith holds the same idea mentioned in the Hadith of Safīnah: The only way to be saved when facing a tribulation or controversy is to refer to the Ahl al-Bayt for guidance. Along with beautifying the sky, stars are also a source of direction for those who travel in the oceans and deserts: They are unfailingly accurate in guiding any traveller to his or her destination. Likewise, the Ahl al-Bayt are guides who save people from conflict or going astray. When Muslims divide themselves into different sects, we must refer to the Ahl al-Bayt since they hold the highest intellectual and spiritual position in which their level of belief and knowledge greatly surpasses ours. After stating this hadith, the Prophet indicates his disapproval of disputing and disagreeing with the Ahl al-Bayt, as it will eventually lead them to disunity and becoming Satan's advocates.

Hence, to understand Islam, it is necessary, and not a mere option, to refer to the Ahl al-Bayt. The hadiths of Thaqalayn, Safīnah, the Gate of *Ḥiṭṭah*, and the Stars are some familiar narrations on this topic found in both Sunni and Shi'a sources.

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may refer to Ibn Bābiwayh, Muhammad b. Ali, *'Uyūn al-Akhbār al-Riḍā*, vol. 2, p. 27; Ṭūsī, Muhammad b. al-Ḥasan, *Amālī*, p. 259.

Chapter 4

The Roles of an Imam

With the dawn of Islam and the declaration in the Qur'an that Prophet Muhammad was the Seal of the Prophets (*khātam al-nabīyyīn*), it was evident that there cannot be any prophet after him. However, the knowledge guaranteed by God to guide humankind which was disseminated by the Prophet was to continue after his death. The need for a leader to convey the Prophet's teachings remained to a) guide humankind for moral and intellectual achievement, and b) justly govern a society.

To prevent from falling into corruption and instead develop in all aspects—whether it be moral, political, social, legal, or intellectual—it is necessary for a Muslim society to be fully acquainted with Islamic principles. God revealed to the Prophet all that was necessary: The entire final message without further revelation. However, the Prophet did not have the opportunity to fully teach all

details in a period of 23 years, as the Qur'anic message is general, particularly in its practical rulings.

Not only was time limited, but society was not yet prepared to be given the full package of Islam given the issues and affairs that had not yet arisen for the public to deliberate on, let alone inquire. Events that required an immediate response did not yet emerge for them to be anticipated along with its solutions. Moreover, the Prophet's message was not taught in the comfort of an academic institute; it was offered during an era of conflicts, when Muslims bore oppression struggling to defend themselves and Islam. Few accepted Islam during its early stages in Mecca, and out of those few, some fled to Ethiopia to escape the intense persecution. Illiteracy was rampant as it was not very long after the Age of Ignorance with the literate ranging from a total of ten to twenty people. It was a gradual process in which Muslims faced new challenges and civilizations, and given the additional matters that transpired after the Prophet's demise, the society needed a leader. As prophethood reached its zenith, the task of presenting true Islam was to continue.

Although nearly all Muslim theologians agree on the necessity of imamate, differing views exist with respect to the Imam's role. As Prophet Muhammad's functions were to teach Islam, to judge, and to rule the public, the question arises as to whether an Imam should inherit him in all three tasks, or merely govern society.

The functions of Prophet Muhammad

Prophet Muhammad played three main roles:

- *Messenger.* All Muslims agree that one of the Prophet's tasks was deliverance of the message. He was to deliver the revelation, which is on morals, beliefs, and practical laws. The Prophet was protected by God to maintain this role with the aim of delivering the message truly and purely, with utmost accuracy and care, and without the slightest alteration. He could not—and did not—add something as simple as a letter to the Qur'an. Although all Muslims agree he was infallible (*ma'ṣūm*),[1] there are different views with regards to the scope of his infallibility. Shi'as believe that all prophets had comprehensive infallibility (*'iṣmah*) before and after their prophethood. Conversely, though some non-Shi'a theologians believe in the Prophet's infallibility in delivering the message, they also hold that the prophets may have committed minor or unintentional sins and mistakes in their personal lives or before they had become prophets.[2]

- *Judge.* Since people are created with free will, no one has the right to issue verdicts on others. However, in

1. Protected from mistakes and sin

2. For more details regarding the subject of infallibility, please refer to Chapter 6: *Meeting the Requirements.*

Islam, a legitimate judge is authorised by God to pass sentences. The only exception is with opposing parties' agreement to arbitration (*qaḍī taḥkīm*), where the judge's authority comes from both parties and does not settle the issue without their prior consent. Nonetheless, believers must accept the prophets' decrees as God has given them administration of the people's affairs. For example, after Prophet David fulfilled his responsibilities and passed several trails, God told him:

يَادَاوُدُ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاكَ خَلِيفَةً فِي الأَرْضِ فَاحْكُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِالحَقِّ وَ لا تتبع الْهَوَى فَيُضِلَّكَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَضِلُّونَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيد بِمَا نَسُوا يَوْمَ الحِسَابِ

O David! Indeed We have made you a vicegerent on the earth. So judge between people with justice, and do not follow desire, or it will lead you astray from the way of God. Indeed those who stray from the way of God — there is a severe punishment for them because of their forgetting the Day of Reckoning. (38:26)

Now that God has given Prophet David the highest prestige of being His representative on earth, the next task is to judge among people with justice to establish an ideal government.

- *Head of state.* In addition to being a messenger and a judge, the Prophet was also responsible for leading socio-political affairs of Muslims. After migration to Medina, the Prophet established a state, and he exercised political leadership in addition to other responsibilities.

Carrying out the Prophet's tasks

Just as Prophet Muhammad's mission was to teach Islam, act as a judge, and rule—rendering the spiritual and political dimensions inseparable—the Shi'a hold that his successors carry out the same functions. Because they don't receive revelation from God as prophets did, the imams acquire their divinely inspired knowledge from the Prophet. Without their guidance, such knowledge is unattainable. The imams have complete authority to disseminate this knowledge, and they do so authentically, without formulating a new law, or offering their opinion. Thus, an imam applies the Prophet's teachings, particularly those that the Prophet could not explicate in detail, to guide humankind and justly govern society. They preserve, deliver, and interpret Islamic information as well as clarify all misunderstandings regarding doctrines and ethical discourse. This guidance is promised by God, regardless of whether our access to the imams is limited or not.

Chapter 5

A Necessary Foundation

The previous chapters explored imamate as one of the five principles of Shi'i Islam, a unanimously agreed concept among Muslims with differing views regarding its significance, the leader's role, and his qualifications. The Prophet's injunctions regarding the necessity of simultaneously holding fast to the Qur'an and the Ahl al-Bayt after his demise were also presented. As Prophet Muhammad's functions were to impart Islam, pass judgement, and lead the Muslim nation, a successor to him must also play the same roles in guidance and leadership. The difference is that the Prophet had direct contact with God, whereas an imam is educated by the Prophet on revelation.

It is necessary for people to have a leader and a guide who draws them nearer to righteousness and ruling out corruption. The imam is a divine favour (*lutf*); God's grace never leaves any dire need of man unrequited and

guarantees the guidance of His creation to its perfection. With His wise plan for creation, God does not create in vain or without an objective to merely preoccupy Himself: The purpose of His grace is to invite humankind towards obedience to Him without pressuring them to do so. God would contradict His aim if He did not assist those who either cannot act upon His commands or find it difficult to do so, and according to reason, such disregard is immoral. Grace is one of God's qualities, and He is exalted from any deficiency in this attribute, as said in the Qur'an:

اللَّهُ لَطِيفٌ بِعِبَادِهِ

God is Gracious to His servant. (42:19)

Consider the goal of creation in a nutshell: The most merciful God wanted to show His mercy, and thus He created this world. He gave this mercy to human beings to become His vicegerents on earth and become a means to receive more mercy. His plan gives us the opportunity to improve ourselves and reach perfection. Yet the question arises: Did God create people for the sake of self-improvement without Him gaining anything in return? Essentially, He creates to give, not to receive, as God does not obtain or earn anything. A needy person who puts effort to accomplish a task seeks a benefit. If I make a house, it is for shelter. If I work, it is for earning money or benefits. If I am working for God, it is because

I want to earn extra blessings and rewards. All in all, it is because I want to receive something, although God does not act or give to obtain anything for Himself. The Persian poet, Rumi, says on behalf of God, "I have not created the people to make some profit; rather, I have created people to show my generosity."[1] A generous person does not expect to be approached for help; he or she looks for favourable circumstances to give and help people. God created us to give the opportunity to perfect ourselves and eventually achieve proximity to Him. This guidance has been given to us through using our reason (*'aql*) and referring to divine revelation (*wahy*):

Reason

The Shi'a use four sources as a means for guidance, of which reason is one of them.[2] The intellect is a source that recommends good to reach higher levels of perfection, and is used defy worldly desires that lead to immorality. It is with reason that we can know God, distinguish good and evil, comprehend morality, and

1. *Mathnawi* by Rūmī, second chapter

2. From a Shi'a point of view, there are four sources in which any investigation about Islam must be based on: The Qur'an, the Sunnah (including the sayings, actions, and tacit approval of the Prophet and imams), reason, and consensus. It is important to note that what has been said above does not mean that every single enquiry must be based on all the aforementioned sources; rather, it means there is no way to establish the truths about Islam other than referring to one or more of the above sources.

understand revelation to eventually develop an unshakeable conviction and innate recognition of God that was once dependent on conceptual knowledge. However, we cannot make full use of our intellect without knowledge. By securing required knowledge, reason only prepares the grounds for faith and assists in our understanding of moral values, and it is left to us to commit. Being thoughtful and rational is required to fully comprehend and thus benefit from religious guidance. And when a person possesses a critical level of intellect, he becomes accountable before God for his beliefs and actions.

Which brings us to question: What is the realm of the intellect? Can the intellect make accurate decisions and distinctions in all cases?

Given the nature of the intellect with examples of people with profound differences of opinion, the intellect alone is incapable of identifying all that is good and thus cannot offer a comprehensive program to guide humankind to its perfection. Imagine a person who possesses an illness and consults an ill-informed doctor regarding the cause. It is unlikely that the doctor will effectively diagnose the patient. Similarly, the human intellect cannot offer an all-inclusive life plan leading to success with its limited knowledge. Though a multitude of views have been proposed with regards to ultimate happiness and achievement, none offer a flawless plan for intellectual, social, and spiritual perfection as changes in approaches and laws day after day still ensue. Although

the intellect is undoubtedly beneficial, it is not sufficient. As to when reason is used properly or not is a separate subject.

Revelation

Revelation encourages and motivates people to value and take advantage of the intellect, and to further strengthen it. Its role is to confirm truths already known by reason, and teach us that which we are incapable of deducing with our reason but are nonetheless essential for our growth and salvation; for example, how God wants us to worship Him, what types of worship are beneficial for the eternal life, how to best lead one's life on earth, what are the consequences of doing or not doing particular acts, and other aspects of the unseen or the unknown we cannot deduce. Many times, the concepts of heaven and hell, the afterlife, and realizing the consequences of our actions prompt us to worship, or to refrain from prohibitions.

Who receives revelation?

There are two possibile scenerios: (1) God sends revelation directly to every person. This is not possible, since not everyone can receive the most sophisticated philosophical doctrines or physical theories without proper training, much less receive revelation that requires unique qualifications. Indeed, being addressed by God is a demanding task; the prophets spent long periods of

spiritual struggle to qualify themselves for being recipients of revelation. And if God spoke directly to everyone through Angel Gabriel, there would be no real test, which is to believe in the *ghayb*, or the unseen. (2) God chooses those who are qualified to be prophets. Prophet Muhammad was not randomly chosen by God to receive revelation. He was truly different from other people: his piety was apparent from the very beginning, as he never worshipped idols and instead worshipped God in the cave of Mount *Hirā* where he reflected and contemplated, rendering him fully prepared for the mission. Even so, receiving revelation was a demanding task:

إِنَّا سَنُلْقِي عَلَيْكَ قَوْلاً ثَقِيلا

Indeed soon We shall cast on you a weighty word. (73:5)

A weighty word refers to the heaviness experienced in receiving, understanding, and maintaining revelation. At times, this was manifested in the physical world, though revelation is not a physical matter. When the Prophet received revelation, his facial expression displayed intense pressure; even the back of the camel he rode caved in when he received it.

If the prophets were flawed in receiving, understanding, or teaching revelation, the purpose behind sending revelation would be lost. Similarly, when inviting people to a lavish feast, it would be reasonable to request

a few agents on your behalf to give everyone invitation cards. But if they misunderstand where and when the feast will be held, the goal will not be achieved.

More than offering a written set of instructions to read and draw lessons from, the prophets were the role models of revelation. Their inspiration nurtured the people's desire to see a first-hand example of putting theory into practice. The fact that they were humans for other people to model their lives and fully purified from sins rendered them suitable exemplars. Thus, God's mercy and grace necessitates that humankind will not be left without a guide. And the concept of imamate deems it necessary to have a guide who will lead the Muslim society after the Prophet's death by presenting true Islam as well as being a political leader, with the exception that the imams did not receive revelation directly from God; they gained their knowledge from Him through the Prophet, and thus, they taught it exactly as the Prophet did.

Chapter 6

The Election Process

In Shī'a Islam, the Imam is first appointed by God, then introduced by the Prophet, and afterwards chosen by the preceding Imam though explicit designation (*naṣṣ*) to (a) lead and guide the Muslim community, and (b) protect the religion and its laws. People are not authorized to elect a prophet or imam for the following reasons:

- People are fallible and are, thus, unable to flawlessly evaluate one another's piety, wisdom, and knowledge, even if the Qur'an and hadith are used as criteria.
- The ability to judge whether a prophet is doing right or wrong renders a prophet useless. It is like giving ourselves the right to judge the validity of a jurist's verdicts (*fatwās*); it defeats the purpose of having a scholar if we can claim to be scholars.
- Imamate is a divine favour: the right to select one belongs exclusively to God. Since God designates

leaders, it is nonsensical for people to select possible leaders. Only God is aware of a person's spiritual capacities and rank. He knows who can carry this burden thoroughly without neglecting the duties of implementing divine justice and summoning humankind to Him. It is God's responsibility to provide for humankind's guidance:

إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا لَلْهُدَى وَ إِنَّ لَنَا لَلآخِرَةَ وَ الأُولى

It is indeed incumbent on Us to guide mankind, for the kingdom *of this world and the hereafter is Ours.* (92:12–13)

(For further reference to verses referring to God as the sole selector of a religious leader, see Chapter 7.)

The extent of consultation

In the Qur'anic Chapter *al-Shūrā* (*Consultation*), revealed in Mecca before the Islamic system of government took place, the Prophet was advised to consult with Muslims before accomplishing various tasks. However, resolving the believers' affairs according to consultation under no circumstance gives people the right to interfere with the legitimacy of a ruler. Although a legitimate ruler is advised to consult, it does not imply that a ruler is elected through that method. Consultation is about *how* to rule, rather than deciding *who* is to rule:

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ لِنتَ لَهُمْ وَ لَوْ كُنتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ
لَانفَضُّوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَ إِسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَ شَاوِرْهُمْ
فِي الأَمْرِ فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ
الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ

It is by God's mercy that you are gentle to them; and had you been harsh and hard-hearted, surely they would have scattered from around you. So excuse them, and plead for forgiveness for them, and consult them in the affairs, and once you are resolved, put your trust in God. Indeed God loves those who trust in Him." (3:159)

The prophets and imams, who were all legitimate leaders authorized by God and not chosen through a council (*shūrā*), must consult with the people. However, when God tell the Prophet to "*consult with the believers,*" the Prophet, and not the council, makes the final decisions, and he is to trust God in carrying out what he knows is appropriate, even if the consultants disagree with him.

Rather than consulting to learn new ideas and approaches, the Prophet did so to model the methods of consultation and discovering accurate insights through a practical learning experience. It was to exchange views to seek out the best tactic in fulfilling a duty, and not to identify what that duty is. He showed his concern and compassion to the believers by consulting with them and this in turn enhanced their self-esteem and knowledge. In the end, the final decision was in the Prophet's hands.

Discussion or consultation cannot take place when it comes to the authoritative instructions set out in the Qur'an and Sunnah, since it may result in eliminating those laws. This is like the meaninglessness of consultation in matters that refer to the legal duties determined in any society. It is impermissible to hold our own views on any subject relating to divine law:

وَ مَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَ لامُؤْمِنَةٍ إِذَا قَضىَ اللَّهُ وَ رَسُولُهُ أَمْرًا أَن يَكُونَ لَهُمُ الْخِيرَةُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِمْ وَ مَنْ يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَ رَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلالاً مُّبِيناً

When God and His Messenger determine a matter, no choice remains therein for any believing woman or man. Whoever turns away from the command of God and His Messenger has openly chosen misguidance. (33:36)

وَ رَبُّکَ يَخلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَ يَختَارُ مَا كَانَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ

Your Lord creates whatever He wishes and chooses. They have no choice. (28:68)

The Qur'an also includes an established system for decision-making and consultation with those who have legitimate power to make decisions:

وَ الَّذِينَ استَجَابُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَ أَقَامُوا الصَّلَوةَ وَ أَمْرُهُمْ شُورَى بَيْنَهُمْ وَ مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُون

And those who respond to their Lord and keep up prayer, and their rule is to take counsel among

themselves, and who spend out of what We have given them. (42:38)

The appointment of an imam is precisely for the same purpose as the designation of a Prophet: to serve humankind as a guide and exemplar. The successorship of the imams after Prophet Muhammad was clearly established according to divine command as said by the Prophet himself on several occasions. Not only is consultation with regards to appointing a leader unnecessary and wrong, but it renders futile for those who attempt to do so; people cannot claim the right to this function as doing so would be usurping God's right.

Chapter 7

Leadership for Whomever He Pleases

In the Qur'an, God refers to Himself as having full sovereignty, governance, and power to choose and judge; He is also our guardian who must be obeyed. The resultant descriptions of these attributes ascertain God's full authority to select and legitimize a leader. Leadership belongs to Him only and He gives it to whomever He pleases. Moreover, people are commanded to obey Him, the Prophet, and those "*vested with authority among the people*" i.e. the Infallibles. Reflection of these verses reveals the Shi'a understanding of imamate as compatible with the Qur'an. These verses are grouped into several classes presented in the following:

Sovereignty (mulk)

مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّين

Master of the Day of Judgment. (1:4)

قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ مَالِکَ الْمُلْکِ تُؤْتِی الْمُلْکَ مَن تَشَاءُ وَ تَنْزِعُ الْمُلْکَ مِمَّن تَشَاءُ وَ تُعِزُّ مَن تَشَاءُ وَ تُذِلُّ مَن تَشَاءُ بِیَدِکَ الْخَیرُ إِنَّکَ عَلی کُلِّ شیءٍ قَدِیرٍ

Say, "O God, Master of all sovereignty! You give sovereignty to whomever You wish, and strip of sovereignty whomever You wish; You make mighty whomever You wish, and You abase whomever You wish; all good is in Your hand. Indeed You have power over all things." (3:26)

This verse denotes two meanings: a) legitimate rule is divine, and b) when governors are given the opportunity to rule, it does not necessarily prove their legitimacy. Dictators who claimed God legitimized them as rulers does not imply that God accepts their authority.

Another hint of God's legitimacy is seen in the Qur'an when Saul (Ṭālūt) was appointed by God as a king (malik):

وَ قَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِیُّهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ بَعَثَ لَکُمْ طَالُوتَ مَلِکاً قَالُوا أَنّی یَکُونُ لَهُ الْمُلْکُ عَلَیْنَا وَ نَحْنُ أَحَقُّ بِالْمُلْکِ مِنْهُ وَ لَمْ یُؤْتَ سَعَةً مِنَ الْمَالِ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ إِصْطَفَاهُ عَلَیْکُمْ وَ زَادَهُ بَسْطَةً فِی الْعِلْمِ وَ الْجِسْمِ وَ اللَّهُ یُؤْتی مُلْکَهُ مَن یَشَاءُ وَ اللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِیمٌ

Their prophet said to them, "God has appointed Saul as king for you." They said, "How can he have kingship over us, when we have a greater right to

kingship than him, as he has not been given ample wealth?" He said, 'Indeed God has chosen him over you, and enhanced him vastly in knowledge and physique, and God gives His kingdom to whomever He wishes, and God is all-bounteous, all-knowing." (2:247)

When God appointed Saul as a ruler, the people opposed it, claiming that Saul had neither been given the right nor has he been given enough wealth to rule. However, God states that He has given Saul knowledge and physique; moreover, this verse elucidates God's right to solely decide on this matter, and the people's inability to interject on the subject of leadership.

Government (hukm)

ثُمَّ رُدُّوا إِلَى اللَّهِ مَوْلاهُمُ الْحَقِّ أَلا لَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَ هُوَ أَسْرَعُ الْحاسِبِينَ

Then they are returned to God, their real master. Look! All rule belongs to Him, and He is the swiftest of reckoners. (6:62)

قُلْ إِنِّي عَلَى بَيِّنَةٍ مِن رَبِّي وَ كَذَّبْتُم بِهِ مَا عِندِي مَا تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ بِهِ إِنِ الْحُكْمُ إِلا لِلَّهِ يَقُصُّ الْحَقَّ وَ هُوَ خَيرُ الْفَاصِلِينَ

Say, 'Indeed I stand on a manifest proof from my Lord and you have denied it. What you seek to hasten is not up to me. Rule belongs only to God; He expounds the truth and He is the best of rulers." (6:57)

The above verses are known to have been misused and misinterpreted by the Kharijites [1] to declare the illegitimacy of Imam Ali's governance. Using these verses, they confirm that leadership cannot be practiced by anyone other than God. However, the above verses do not state that a leader is uncalled for; rather, the verses indicate that governance belongs to God, and it is only He who can legitimize a ruler:

قُلِ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثُوا لَهُ غَيْبُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَ الأَرْضِ أَبْصِرْ بِهِ وَ أَسْمِعْ مَا لَهُم من دُونِهِ مِن وَلِيٍّ وَ لايُشْرِكُ فِي حُكْمِهِ أَحَداً

Say, "God knows best how long they remained. To Him belongs the Unseen of the heavens and the earth. How well does He see! How well does He hear! They have no guardian besides Him, and none shares with Him in His rule."(18:26)

Although other verses refer to the notion of governance belonging to God, the above verses state that God alone has authority and is its sole giver. He does not allow one's interference with His rule, nor does He have a partner in His governance. We can infer from these verses that one of the cases of polytheism (shirk) is to

1. The Kharijites are Muslims who supported the authority of Imam Ali ibn Abī Ṭalib and then later rejected his leadership. They are distinct from Sunni and Shi'a Muslims, and are the only Muslims to disagree with the concept of imamate.

believe in the appointment and legitimization of a leader by anyone other than God Himself.

The power to choose (ikhtīyār)

وَ رَبُّکَ یَخلُقُ مَا یَشَاءُ وَ یختَارُ مَا کَانَ لَهُمُ الخیرةُ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَ تَعَالی عَمَّا یُشْرِکُونَ وَ رَبُّکَ یَعْلَمُ مَا تُکِنُّ صُدُورُهُمْ وَ مَا یُعْلِنُونَ وَ هُوَ اللَّهُ لا إِلهَ إِلا هُوَ لَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِی الأُولیَ وَ الآخِرَةِ وَ لَهُ الْحُکْمُ وَ إِلَیْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ

Your Lord creates whatever He wishes and chooses. They have no choice. Glory be to Allah and exalted above [having] any partners they ascribe [to Him].Your Lord knows whatever their hearts conceal, and whatever they disclose. He is Allah, there is no god except Him. All praise belongs to Him in this world and the Hereafter. All judgement belongs to Him, and to Him you will be brought back. (28:68–70)

The option of choosing a legitimate leader is only through God's decision. The verse *"Your Lord knows whatever their hearts conceal"* refers to those who interfere with this divine decision.

The power to command (amr)

یُغْشِی اللَّیْلَ النَّهارَ یَطْلُبُهُ حَثِیثاً وَ الشَّمْسَ وَ الْقَمَرَ وَ النُّجُومَ مُسَخَّرَاتٍ بِأَمْرِهِ أَلا لَهُ الخَلْقُ وَ الأَمْرُ تَبَارَکَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِینَ

He draws the night's cover over the day, which pursues it swiftly, and [He created] the sun, the moon, and the

stars, [all of them] disposed by His command. Look! All creation and command belong to Him. Blessed is God, the Lord of all the worlds. (7:54)

وَ لَوْ أَنَّ قُرْءَاناً سُيِّرَتْ بِهِ الْجِبالُ أَوْ قُطِّعَتْ بِهِ الأَرْضُ أَوْ كُلِّمَ بِهِ الْمَوْتى بَل لِلَّهِ الأَمْرُ جَمِيعاً

If only it were a Qur'an whereby the mountains could be moved, or the earth could be toured, or the dead could be spoken to. Rather all dispensation belongs to God. (13:31)

People cannot decide on the system of ruling based on their desires. God who decides who rules and instructs us on how one must do so.

Judgement (hukm)

God Himself appointed Prophet David to be a caliph, and was asked to rule and judge:

يَا دَاوُدُ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاكَ خَلِيفَةً فِي الأَرْضِ فَاحْكُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ وَ لاتَتَّبِعْ الْهَوَى فَيُضِلَّكَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَضِلُّونَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ بِمَا نَسُوا يَوْمَ الحِسابِ

O David! Indeed We have made you a vicegerent on the earth. So judge between people with justice, and do not follow desire, or it will lead you astray from the way of God. Indeed those who stray from the way of God—there is a severe punishment for them because of their forgetting the Day of Reckoning. (38:26)

A true believer is the one who refers any unclear cases to the Prophet, and he wholeheartedly accepts any judgment the Prophet makes. The following verse also shows that part of the role of a leader is to act as a judge:

فَلا وَ رَبِّکَ لایُؤْمِنُونَ حَتیَ یُحَکِّمُوکَ فِیمَا شَجَرَ بَیْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لا یجدوا فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَرَجاً مِمَّا قَضَیْتَ وَ یُسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِیما

But no, by your Lord! They will not believe until they make you a judge in their disputes, then do not find within their hearts any dissent to your verdict and submit in full submission. (4:65)

Obedience (tā'ah)

یَاأَیُّهَا الَّذِینَ ءَامَنُوا أَطِیعُوا اللَّهَ وَ أَطِیعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَ أُوْلِی الأَمْرِ مِنْکمْ فَإِن تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَیءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَی اللَّهِ وَ الرَّسُولِ إِن کُنتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَ الْیَوْمِ الآخِرِ ذَالِکَ خَیْرٌ وَ أَحْسَنُ تَأْوِیلاً

O you who have faith! Obey God and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you. And if you dispute concerning anything, refer it to God and the Apostle, if you have faith in God and the Last Day. That is better and more favourable in outcome. (4:59)

Muslims are commanded to obey God, the Prophet, and the *ulul amr* or "*those vested with authority.*" Since this verse was addressed to Muslims during the time of the Prophet, Muslims were commanded to obey the *ulul amr* in that specific period. An *ulul amr* during that era verifies

that there lived an individual known to the Muslims as the deputy of the Prophet.

Guardianship (walī)

قُلْ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثُوا لَهُ غَيْبُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَ الأَرْضِ أَبْصِرْ بِهِ وَ أَسْمِعْ مَا لَهُم من دُونِهِ مِن وَلِى وَ لايُشْرِكُ فِي حُكْمِهِ أَحَداً

Say, "God knows best how long they remained. To Him belongs the Unseen of the heavens and the earth. How well does He see! How well does He hear! They have no guardian besides Him, and none shares with Him in His judgment." (18:26)

إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللَّهُ وَ رَسُولُهُ وَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَوةَ وَ يُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَوةَ وَ هُمْ رَاكِعُونَ وَ مَن يَتَوَلَّ اللَّهَ وَ رَسُولَهُ وَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا فَإِنَّ حِزْبَ اللَّهِ هُمُ الْغَالِبُونَ

Your guardian is only Allah, His Apostle, and the faithful who maintain the prayer and give the zakāt while bowing down. Whoever takes for his guardians God, His Apostle and the faithful [should know that] the confederates of God are indeed the victorious. (5:55–56)

Wilāyah (guardianship) refers to the leadership that belongs to God, and He gives this to whomsoever He pleases. It is the special relationship that exists between a legitimate leader and his followers who altogether form

an organized and well-structured community with the same ideals and causes.

Here, *walī* does not merely mean "friend," because anyone can be a friend, and the criteria for friendship is not specified in the verse. Also, to be mere friends would not lead to the formation of the confederates of God. Wilāyah refers to the leadership that belongs to God, and He gives this to whomsoever He pleases. He is pleased with both the Messenger and with the one who gave *zakat* while bowing down in prayer.

God is the true guardian (*walī*): no one has a *walī* other than Him, and no one can interfere in this reign. Reign, or leadership (*hukm*) and guardianship (*wilāyah*), are related to each other: God is the guardian (*walī*) and He appoints the guardian (*walī*); He has the leadership, (*hukm*) and he appoints the leader (*hākim*); He has kingship (*mulk*) and He appoints the king (*malik*).

Chapter 8

Meeting the Requirements

God does not choose a prophet or imam unless all the necessary conditions for carrying the divine message are found in him. His grace requires that He gifts humankind with guides who preserve the religion and leads religious and secular affairs of society after the Prophet's death to pave the way for human excellence and eternal bliss. If the imam is to perform his roles, he must hold the merits of superiority and infallibility to qualify him for the task.

Superiority

The responsibility of leading a society cannot be given to just anyone. Giving preference to a mediocre person while a highly qualified individual is present would be against divine justice. Like the Prophet, the imam outshines all people in every virtue and expertise, rendering him a unique person is his own age. The imams

were endowed with a special knowledge from God through Prophet Muhammad, and are the most perfect people after him.

Whether it is piety, knowledge, intelligence, wisdom, or bravery; management, communication, or law enforcement, the imam surpasses others in everything, and this includes holding no physical imperfections. His courage assists in successfully leading society at war and peace; his wisdom and consciousness in meeting the demands of the people's personal and social lives; and his comprehensive knowledge of Islamic principles in all its scope and dimensions in implementing laws and educating the public.

Infallibility

The Prophet and the twelve Imams were infallible (*ma'ṣūm*), or completely immune from committing sins and mistakes whether it be intentional, unintentional, due to inattentiveness, or before and after prophethood or imamate. The Arabic noun *'iṣmah* literally means "to save" or "to protect." In Islamic theology, rather than referring to protection from physical dangers or diseases, an infallible is protected from committing sins and mistakes, rendering him immaculate.

Just as various wrongdoings are easily avoided by laypeople, such as drinking muddy water, an infallible holds a profound understanding and knowledge of the detrimental consequences of every sin, preventing him

from even thinking of wrongdoing, let alone committing them.

God does not arbitrarily shield a given group of people from sinning. He does not guard them without their free will. The decision to refrain from sins and mistakes requires their determination and willpower; they perform exceptionally with what they are accountable for. After succeeding in abstention, an infallible relies on God's protection. Khāje Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭ sī in his *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal* explains the nature of infallibility as one who can sin but chooses to refrain from it:

> Infallibility is when the servant [of God] can perform sins but does not wish to do so at all. And this lack of will [for sins] or the existence of something that prevents him from it is a Divine grace. So, he does not disobey God not because he is unable to do so, but because he does not will to do so, or because there is something that overrides his will. Thus, considering his power and free will it is possible for him to perform sins, but considering his lack of will or the existence of the overriding obstacle, it is impossible.[1]

1. Ṭūsī, Naṣīr al-Dīn, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal,* p. 525. The original text is as follows:

العصمة هی أن یکون العبد قادرا علی المعاصی غیر مرید لها مطلقا. و عدم إرادته او وجود صارفة یکون من اللّه تعالی لطفا فی حقه. فهو لایعصی اللّه، لا لعجزه، بل لعدم إرادته او لکون صارفة غالبا علی

Infallibles both (a) have no will to commit sins, and (b) are protected by God. They performed their best, and consequently God provided them with extra care. This is a general law in the universe; whoever desires worldly gain and works for it will receive support from God and whoever works for gaining eternal happiness will also receive God's support:

كُلاً نُّمِدُّ هَؤُلاءِ وَ هؤُلاءِ مِنْ عَطَاءِ رَبِّکَ وَ مَا كَانَ عَطَاءُ رَبِّکَ مَحْظُوراً

To these and to those—to all We extend the bounty of your Lord, and the bounty of your Lord is not confined. (17:20)

The prophets and imams did their utmost to please God and live a virtuous life, and God in turn helped them immensely throughout their lives.

Receiving revelation and immediate communication from the unseen (*ghayb*) is so extraordinarily demanding an experience that it can only be borne by one possessing a high spiritual capacity: *"Surely We will make to light upon you a weighty Word"* (73:5). None can achieve this capacity while being tainted by sin given its harm to the spirit and to the purity of the soul. Even if committed unintentionally, the sinner may suffer from its destructive

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إرادته. فوقوع المعصية منه ممكن بالنظر إلى قدرته، و ممتنع بالنظر إلى عدم إرادته او لكون صارفة غالبا على إرادته.

consequences, just as drinking alcohol results in drunkenness and drives one's spirit away from God. An infallible must be spiritually prepared to receive God's message; he or she cannot be a layperson who committed sins such as worshiping idols and imbibing in alcohol, and then unexpectedly becomes a prophet or imam.

A question then arises regarding the difference between the Prophet and the rest of humankind. If God protected some laypeople from sin, wouldn't they also become prophets? The reality is, God knows in advance as to whom will be pious enough to qualify for prophethood or imamate, and thus the Prophet, Lady Fatimah, and the imams deservedly have been given extra protection in advance. This is similar to an experienced teacher who identifies a bright student's future beforehand. God gave the prophets extra care and protection while they were in the wombs of their mothers because He knows that when they become accountable for their actions, they will exceed all others in piety. It is not because of the extra care that they excel; rather, because they excel God gives them extra care and protection.[2]

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2. It is believed by many scholars that before we were created in this world, we existed all in another world called *'Âlam al-Dharr* (the Universe of the Particles). In that universe, we witnessed the Oneness and Creatorship of God. For this reason, human beings have an innate knowledge of God. In that universe, the people displayed differences in their response; i.e. some were hesitant to believe and others were quick to do so, and as a result they display

There are several arguments that attest to the infallibility of the Ahl al-Bayt; the strongest one of them is the Verse of Purification (*Taṭhīr*) which states that they are thoroughly purified by God:

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ ٱللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنكُمُ ٱلرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ ٱلْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيراً

Indeed God desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification. (33:33)

The Ahl al-Bayt never at one point committed evil actions, held false beliefs, made mistakes, or had low

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differed ranks of faith in this universe. The following verse is believed to attest to this:

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِن بَنِي آدَمَ مِن ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَى أَنفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَى شَهِدْنَا أَن تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غَافِلِينَ

And when your Lord brought forth from the children of Adam, from their backs, their descendants, and made them bear witness against their own souls: Am I not your Lord? They said: Yes! we bear witness. Lest you should say on the day of resurrection: Surely we were heedless of this. (7:172)

This idea is also used to explain why some people receive special support from God right from the time of their birth or even before. Of course, I personally believe that *'Ālam al-Dharr* was not temporally before this universe; rather, it is a universe before this universe in *order* and not in *time*. It does not mean that there was a time we were present there and then we came here. These are parallel worlds. *'Alam al-Dharr* came before this current one in order, because the spiritual world is prior to the physical one.

moral conduct to be purified afterwards. God created them infallible by warding off all types of filths from them, rendering them wholly preserved from the beginning.

Although there are believers who do not commit sins and are technically considered in jurisprudence as "*'ādil*" (just), such as those who qualify for leading the prayer or passing verdicts, they do not hold the same status of purification as the Ahl al-Bayt. Regarding the pious and obedient, God says:

إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ ٱتَّقَوْا۟ إِذَا مَسَّهُمْ طَٰٓئِفٌ مِّنَ ٱلشَّيْطَٰنِ تَذَكَّرُوا۟ فَإِذَا هُم مُّبْصِرُونَ.

> *When those who are Godwary are touched by a visitation of Satan, they remember [God] and, behold, they perceive.* (7:201)

Those who have fervently followed Satan have themselves have become satanic or Satan's allies, and there are those who have not reached that level of corruption although they have some of these allies accompanying them (*qarīn*).[3] The pious, on the other

3. Shaikh Anṣārī, a great Shi'a scholar and marja', was an extremely pious person. When his wife was going to deliver a baby, the ladies who were available were to help prepare a special meal for her, that which needed a lot of oil to give strength. Sheikh Anṣārī did not have money of his own, although he had the khums money in which he would spend on his students. He thought, "Since I am the teacher of all these students, I can take this money and pay for the oil." When he took the money and went to buy the oil, he felt regret and

hand, are visited by Satan and his allies, yet not accompanied by them, since they do not obey him in general. Satan's allies surround them, waiting for moments when believers become heedless to attack. The pious quickly become alert and may experience a momentary darkness when satans approach them. Because of the believers' piety, God removes all their veils, enabling them to see and think clearly as said in the above verse. However, the Ahl al-Bayt have perfect piety, higher than the mere abstention of committing sins or mistakes applicable to pious people, purified from any and every unpleasant entity, and are a combination of excellent noble traits and physical appearance.

Duration of infallibility

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returned to leave the money from whence he got it. The next day, someone went to Sheikh Anṣārī and said, "I saw Satan in my dream with different kinds of rope and chains. I asked the him, 'What are these ropes and chains for?' Satan replied, 'For every person I have a special rope or chain to catch him and make him follow me. Some are very strong because these are strong believers, so I need to have a strong chain or rope to prevent them from escaping. For some we do not need a strong rope; a thread is enough.' The man asked, 'Which is my rope or chain?' The Satan replied, 'You do not need one. You already follow me.' Then he saw the strong rope and asked, 'What is the strongest one for? Who is the one who you try to fasten with this?' He replied, 'This is for Sheikh Anṣārī. I was able to fasten him once, but he untied himself and escaped.'" When he explained this to Sheikh Anṣārī, he realized that this was a test, and although he was legally qualified to take the money, he thought, 'If I use this money, are all students able to use this money and buy oil for their wives? If all students cannot do this then I as a marja' cannot do this.' And he returned the money.

There is a consensus among all Muslims that the prophets were infallible after prophethood for precise verbal and nonverbal delivery of the divine message. The differing views concern the period in which they were infallible.

One distinctive aspect of Shi'ī thought is the extent of infallibility; the prophets and imams were infallible in their personal lives before and after prophethood. Rather than being mere tutors or propagators, they are designated to embody a path of perfection and piety in their sayings and conduct to successfully fulfil the mission; thus, they were also practical role models to assist people in achieving their ultimate goal. Because they performed superbly during the time in which they were held accountable for their actions, God protected them during the moments they were not held accountable—throughout their childhood or before committing unintentional mistakes.

Before the dawn of Islam, when deceitfulness was commonplace, Prophet Muhammad was admired for his noble character, particularly his honesty, which had gained him the title *al-Amīn* (The Trustworthy). In his first call to the people after receiving revelation, he asked, "If I warn you that an army behind this mountain is ready to kill you, would you believe me?" They replied, "Of course. We have never known you to tell lies." He then warned them about the hereafter; on the rewards for

those who seek the truth and strive to be moral, and the punishment for those who do the opposite.[4]

The great Shi'a scholar and prolific author 'Allāmah Hillī in his *al-Bāb al-Ḥ dī 'Ashr* (*The Eleventh Gate*) describes the infallibility of the prophets:

> Truly, the prophets are infallible from the beginning of their lives until the end, because the hearts of the people do not tend to obey those whom they have witnessed previously committing different types of minor and major sins, and despised or unpleasant acts.[5]

In Shī'īsm, infallibility extends to Lady Fatimah and the twelve Imams for reasons clarified in the following section.

Justifying infallibility

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4. Bukhārī, Muhammad b. Ismāeīl, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, vol. 7, p. 360, no. 4131. The original text is as follows:

فَقَالَ: أَرَأَيْتَكُمْ لَوْ أَخْبَرْتُكُمْ أَنَّ خَيْلاً بِالْوَادِي تُرِيدُ أَنْ تُغِيرَ عَلَيْكُمْ أَكُنْتُمْ مُصَدِّقِيَّ؟ قَالُوا: نَعَمْ مَا جَرَّبْنَا عَلَيْكَ إِلا صِدْقاً، قَالَ: فَإِنِّي نَذِيرٌ لَكُمْ بَيْنَ يَدَيْ عَذَابٍ شَدِيدٍ

For a Shi'a source one may refer to Fayḍ Kāshānī, Mullā Muḥsin, *Tafsīr al- Ṣafī*, vol. 5, p. 389.

5. Hillī, Jamāl al-Dīn Ḥasan b. Yūsuf, *al-Bāb al-Hādī 'Ashr*, p. 38. The original text is as follows:

انه معصوم من أول عمره إلى آخره ، لعدم انقياد القلوب إلى طاعة من عهد منه فى سالف عمره أنواع المعاصى: الكبائر و الصغائر و ما تنفر النفس منه

It may be difficult to comprehend that there existed people who were completely infallible, perhaps because we do not have direct access to one and are waiting in preparation for the 12th infallible Imam of our time. However, divinely appointed infallible guides are a necessary part of God's plan for creation to support humankind in accomplishing their role in serving Him.

A fallible person cannot guide society for both intuitive and logical reasons. People have a natural inclination towards inner and outer perfection, whether it be looking at a perfect person, accompanying him or her, or becoming perfect themselves. Just as we love and admire impeccable traits, we equally have an aversion to the opposite. Much of the advertising media and film industry thrive on this tendency; considerable time and money is spent on perfecting particular individuals in hopes to infiltrate specific ideologies. Though much of the focus is on physical appeal, good-looking actors holding noble qualities such as selflessness, integrity, courage, intelligence, and compassion have a two-fold advantage in gaining admiration.

This was the case of the Infallibles, who not only displayed noble qualities in its perfection, but they appealed to the young and elderly with their good looks, neat appearance, and pleasing fragrance. In other words, they possessed everything that constitutes a true role model with the purpose of fulfilling the divine message.

Whether it is before or after prophethood, in his personal or social life, people cannot accept that a leader

with sins or imperfections such as unintentional sins, making mistakes, and being forgetful can be chosen by God for the following reasons:

1. The Prophet would be deemed untrustworthy and thus undeserving of having followers. People who make fewer mistakes or possess more skill may render themselves as better and more suitable for leadership.

2. People would not always be able to distinguish among intentional and unintentional actions. If they witness a prophet breaking a law, disregarding people's rights, or ignoring a religious duty, they may doubt as to whether he is mindful of his actions or fully convinced of his mission.

3. His flaws may be used for laypeople to justify their own faults.

4. The prophets' enemies, notorious for searching for minor excuses to either disbelieve in the message or to sway others away from it, would use the prophets' shortcomings against him.

It was a result of Prophet Muhammad's trustworthiness and noble qualities before his mission in both his personal and social life that the people trusted his call to Islam. By protecting the prophets and imams

against sins and mistakes, God helps humanity in their pursuit of happiness in both worlds.

Sheikh Muhammad Riḍa Muẓaffar, author of *Aqāid al-Imāmīyyah* (*The Faith of Shi'a Islam*), describes his reasons as to why a prophet must be infallible:

> The reason for the infallibility of a prophet is that if he commits a sin or mistake, we are to choose between two alternatives: either we obey his sins and mistakes, and eventually do wrong, or we must not obey his sins and mistakes, which too is wrong, because this is contrary to the concept of prophethood where obedience is necessary. Moreover, if everything he says or does has the possibility of being either right or wrong, then it is impossible for us to follow him. The result is that the benefit of his mission will be lost. It becomes unnecessary, and the Prophet would be categorized among the laypeople whose acts and speech do not have the excellent worth that we seek, resulting in no obedience and his actions will be unreliable. The same reason is given for the infallibility of the imams, because we believe that the imam is appointed by Allah as the Prophet's representative (*khalīfah*) to guide humankind.[6]

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6. Muẓaffar, Muhammad Riḍa, *Aqāid al-Imāmīyyah*, (*The Faith of Shi'a Islam*), Chapter of Prophethood: Our Belief about Infallibility of Prophets, p. 54. The English translation is from *The Beliefs of Shi'a Islam* published by Anṣāriyān Publications. The original text is as follows:

والدليل على وجوب العصمة: أنّه لو جاز أن يفعل النبي المعصية، أو يخطأ وينسى، وصدر منه شيء من هذا القبيل، فإمّا أن يجب إتّباعه في

Thus, a) if we disobey the prophet, there is no use in sending him by God, b) if we obey him while he commits sins and mistakes, we will be misled, and c) if we want to select him, we can't, since that would assume we are more qualified than him.[7]

فعله الصادر منه عصياناً أو خطأً، أو لا يجب: فان وجب اتّباعه فقد جوّزنا فعل المعاصي برخصة من الله تعالى، بل أوجبنا ذلک، وهذا باطل بضرورة الدين والعقل. وإن لم يجب اتّباعه فذلک ينافي النبوّة التي لابدّ أن تقترن بوجوب الطاعة أبداً. على أن كل شيء يقع منه من فعل أو قول فنحن نحتمل فيه المعصية أو الخطأ، فلايجب إتّباعه في شيء من الاشياء، فتذهب فائدة البعثة، بل يصبح النبي كسائر الناس، ليس لكلامهم ولا لعملهم تلک القيمة العالية التي يعتمد عليها دائماً، كما لا تبقى طاعة حتمية لاوامره، ولا ثقة مطلقة بأقواله وأفعاله. وهذا الدليل على العصمة يجرى عيناً في الامام؛ لان المفروض فيه أنه منصوب من الله تعالى لهداية البشر خليفة للنبي.

7. In 2003, we had a discussion during the first Catholic-Shi'a Dialogue in the UK with several Christian friends about Prophet Abraham. We shared our views, which included both similarities and differences. One difference was our belief in Prophet Abraham's infallibility. Some opposed and argued that the prophets were not perfect; that their fallibility was better for them because people could better relate to a prophet who had shortcomings and occasional sins rather than follow perfect beings. I argued that, as mentioned above, if a prophet is not perfect, he cannot receive revelation. Moreover, the argument includes a practical problem: Whenever we have our own opinion about something and we are not happy with the position taken by a given prophet, we may think that indeed this was one of the areas that the prophet made a mistake and I can better understand. For example, if a prophet fought against oppression and

God's plan for creation necessitates divinely appointed qualified leaders to support humankind in accomplishing their role of servitude towards Him. According to Shi'i theologians, the quality of infallibility must also exist in the imams because they are to continue the role of the Prophet in teaching Islam. If they fail to accurately present it, they would not be fully trusted, and the benefit of having an imam will be lost.

you are a pacifist, you may judge the prophet's position as a shortcoming and choose what suits you or what you deem noble.

Chapter 9

Imam Ali's Successorship in the Qur'an

Ali, the son of Abī Ṭalib, the cousin and son-in-law of Prophet Muhammad, was the first divinely-appointed Imam. He was the only one to have been gifted the rare opportunity of being under the care of—and educated by—the Prophet from a young age and the first to accept Islam. In undertaking the most arduous tasks in sacrificing himself for the Prophet and bringing victory to the Muslims during the major battles of Islam, his courage earned him the title "Lion of God." During the time the Muhājirīn and Anṣār[1] were commanded to live as brothers, the Prophet selected Ali as his brother. What

1. The Muhājirīn are the Muslims who emigrated from Mecca to Medina; they were compelled to leave their homes and wealth. The Anṣār are the Muslims of Medina who gave support to the Muhājirīn brethren in their own homes and comforted them with their wealth.

is more, the Prophet married Ali to his only daughter, Lady Fatimah.

In the previous chapters, the point was made that leadership occurs through divine appointment. In this chapter, we will refer to the Qur'anic verses that indicate imamate, or the successorship of Imam Ali. In the next chapter, we will refer to various authentic hadiths that introduce Imam Ali as the divinely appointed successor to Prophet Muhammad.

1. Giving charity while bowing in prayer

إِنَّما وَلِيُّكُمُ اللَّهُ وَ رَسُولُهُ وَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَوةَ وَ يُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَوةَ وَ هُمْ رَاكِعُونَ

Your guardian is only God, His Apostle, and the faithful who maintain the prayer and give the zakāt while bowing down. (5:55)

According to both Sunni and Shi'a Muslims, Imam Ali was the only person who paid charity (*zakat*) while bowing in prayer. In one narration, Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī, a close companion to the Prophet, describes the scene:

> One day, I was praying with the Prophet in the mosque when a beggar walked in pleading for help, yet no one responded. He then raised his hands towards the heavens and said, "O God! Be a witness that I came to the Prophet's mosque and no one gave me anything." In the meantime, Imam Ali was bowing (*rukū'*)

> during his prayer, and upon hearing this, he held out his little finger with a ring on it towards the beggar, who came forward and took the ring.

This incident occurred in the Prophet's presence, and he then raised his face towards heaven and prayed:

> O Lord! My brother Musa begged You to open his breast and to make his work easy for him, to loosen the knot of his tongue so that people might understand him, and to appoint from among his relations his brother, as his vizier, and to strengthen his back with Harun and to make Harun his partner in his work (20:25-36). O God! You said to Musa, "*We will strengthen your arm with your brother. No one will now have access to either of you!*" (28:35). O God! I am Muhammad and You have given me distinction. Open my breast for me, make my work easy for me, and from my family appoint my brother Ali as my vizier. And strengthen my back with him.

The Prophet had not yet finished his prayers when Angel Gabriel revealed the above-quoted verse about Imam Ali giving *zakat* (5:55).[2]

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2. Tha'labī, Abū Isḥāq Ahmad b. Ibrāḥīm, *al-Kashf wa al-Bayān 'an Tafsir al-Qur'an,* vol. 4, p. 80-81. Full text of hadith in Arabic is as follows:

> قال: يا أيها الناس من عرفنى فقد عرفنى و من لم يعرفنى فأنا جندب بن جنادة البدرى، أبو ذر الغفارى: سمعت رسول اللّه صلّى اللّه عليه و سلّم بهاتين و إلا صمّتا و رأيته بهاتين و إلا فعميتا يقول: علىّ قائد

The debate lies in the idea that perhaps *believers* in verse 5:55 refers to all believers. However, this cannot be accepted, because there is no general recommendation that asks people to give charity when they are bowing in prayer. This verse can only refer to that event where God identified a trait that was exclusive to Imam Ali. Additionally, the term "believers" may not always refer to all believers. For example, take this verse:

البررة، و قاتل الكفرة، منصور من نصره، مخذول من خذله أما إنى صليت مع رسول اللّه يوما من الأيام صلاة الظهر فدخل سائل فى المسجد فلم يعطه أحد فرفع السائل يده إلى السماء و قال: اللهم اشهد إنى سألت فى مسجد رسول اللّه فلم يعطنى أحد شيئا و كان على راكعا فأومى إليه بخنصره اليمنى و كان يتختم فيها فأقبل السائل حتى أخذ الخاتم من خنصره و ذلک بعين النبى صلّى اللّه عليه و سلّم فلما فرغ النبيّ صلّى اللّه عليه و سلّم من الصلاة فرفع رأسه إلى السماء و قال: «اللهم إن أخى موسى سألک، فقال: رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِى صَدْرِى وَ يَسِّرْ لِى أَمْرِى ... وَ اجْعَلْ لِى وَزِيراً مِنْ أَهْلِى هارُونَ أَخِى اشْدُدْ بِهِ أَزْرِى الآية، فأنزلت عليه قرآنا ناطقا سَنَشُدُّ عَضُدَکَ بِأَخِيکَ وَ نَجْعَلُ لَكُما سُلْطاناً اللهم و أنا محمد نبيّک و صفيّک اللهم فاشْرَحْ لِى صَدْرِى وَ يَسِّرْ لِى أَمْرِى ... وَ اجْعَلْ لِى وَزِيراً مِنْ أَهْلِى عليا أشدد به ظهرى» قال أبوذر: فو اللّه ما استتم رسول اللّه الكلمة حتى أنزل عليه جبرئيل من عند اللّه، فقال: يا محمد اقرأ، فقال: و ما أقرأ؟ قال: اقرأ إِنَّما وَلِيُّكُمُ اللَّهُ وَ رَسُولُهُ، إلى راكِعُونَ.

أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَن تُتْرَكُوا وَ لَمَّا يَعْلَمْ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا مِنْكُمْ وَ لَمْ يَتَّخِذُوا مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ وَ لا رَسُولِهِ وَ لا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلِيجَةً وَ اللَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

Do you suppose that you will be let off while God has not yet ascertained those of you who wage jihād and those who do not take, besides God and His Apostle and the believers, anyone as [their] confidant? God is well aware of what you do. (9:16)

God wants to make it known to the people as to who is prepared to do jihād (*mujāhid*) and by no means develop a personal relationship with someone other than Him, the Prophet, and the believers (*mu'minūn*). Who are these "*believers*"? Far from referring to all believers, this verse suggests that even during the life of the Prophet, Muslims were asked to refer to God, then the Prophet, and then *a select group of people* who are full-fledged believers, par excellence—not a *mu'min* in the general sense. Thus, "*mu'minūn*" here signifies all members of the Ahl al-Bayt, which includes Imam Ali. Additionally, this confirms that the *ulul amr, "those vested with authority,"* were present during the Prophet's time.

2. The witness after the Prophet

At least two verses—11:17 and 13:43—clearly indicate that Imam Ali was the witness after the Prophet. Before delving into the verses, the concept of "witness" and their roles will be expounded at greater length.

The concept of witness

In the Qur'an, the most outstanding groups of people are those upon whom God has bestowed His blessings, and every Muslim at least ten times a day when reading the Chapter *Fātihah* (The Opening) in his prayers asks God to guide him towards their path—the Right Path:

إِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ

Guide us on the straight path, the path of those whom You have blessed. (1:5–6)

These groups are four:

وَ مَن يُطِعِ اللَّهَ وَ الرَّسُولَ فَأُوْلَئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّنَ وَ الصِّدِّيقِينَ وَ الشُّهدَاءِ وَ الصَّالِحِينَ وَ حَسُنَ أُولَئِكَ رَفِيقاً

Whoever obeys Allah and the Apostle —they are with those whom Allah has blessed, including the prophets and the truthful, the martyrs and the righteous, and excellent companions are they! (4:69)

The witnesses come in rank corresponding to the prophets and the most truthful. Indeed, many witnesses were prophets and all witnesses were undoubtedly truthful. Several verses in the Qur'an refer to them:

وَ يَوْمَ نَبْعَثُ مِن كلُ أُمَّةٍ شَهِيدًا ثُمَّ لايُؤْذَنُ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ وَ لاهُمْ يُستَعْتَبُونَ

One Day We shall raise from all Peoples a Witness: then will no excuse be accepted from Unbelievers, nor will they receive any favours. (16:84)

وَ يَوْمَ نَبْعَثُ فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ شَهِيداً عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ أنفُسِهِمْ وَ جِئْنَا بِكَ شَهِيداً عَلَى هَؤلاءِ وَ نَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ تِبْيَاناً لِكُلِّ شَيءٍ وَ هُدًى وَ رَحْمَةً وَ بُشْرَى لِلْمُسْلِمِينَ

One day We shall raise from all Peoples a witness against them, from amongst themselves: and We shall bring you as a witness against these (your people): and We have sent down to you the Book explaining all things, a Guide, a Mercy, and Glad Tidings to Muslims. (16:89)

فَكَيْفَ إِذَا جِئْنَا مِن كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ بِشَهِيدٍ وَ جِئْنَا بِكَ عَلَىَ هَؤلاءِ شَهِيدًا

So how shall it be, when We bring from every nation a witness and We bring you as a witness to them? (4:41)

On the Day of Judgement, when all nations will be brought before God, a witness will come from each nation; there is no nation without a witness over them who draw attention to the right way and will testify the divine message to have been clearly conveyed to all peoples, in addition to the divine signs witnessed in nature. Every generation will be made to answer in front

of the witness appointed to them, which God will call to witness over them: how did they believe and behave? Did they accept or reject the messenger of God? Were they true believers, hypocrites, or disbelievers? There will be no room for any excuses. The witness will answer for every single member of that nation. To qualify as a witness, he or she must have divine knowledge and lived alongside members of their society.

The Qur'an states that a witness must be a person from amongst the people themselves. Prophet Muhammad will witness against the people of his time, for both believers and disbelievers alike.

The roles of a witness

- *They are God's hujjah.* Although *hujjah* is often translated as a "proof" or "argument," it technically refers to something or someone that helps one understand the will of God. A *hujjah* can be used to defend one's position if they have acted upon it. On the Day of Judgment, both God and His servants refer to the *hujjah* He provided us with.

  The main *hujjah* are our intellect (*'aql*) and the prophets who received the divine message for humankind through revelation. Since there must be a *hujjah* in each age, the imams are *hujjah* after Prophet Muhammad. The witnesses are all *hujjah.* By considering their words and actions, you have a good *hujjah* to justify your conduct. For example, God says:

وَ يَوْمَ يُنَادِيهِمْ فَيَقُولُ أَيْنَ شُرَكَاءِيَ الَّذِينَ كُنتُمْ تَزْعُمُونَ وَ نَزَعْنَا مِن كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ شَهِيداً فَقُلْنَا هَاتُواْ بُرْهَانَكُمْ فَعَلِمُواْ أَنَّ الْحَقَّ لِلَّهِ وَ ضَلَّ عَنهُم مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرونَ

The day He will call out to them and say, "Where are My partners that you used to claim?" We shall draw from every nation a witness and say, "Bring your proof." Then they will know that all reality belongs to God and what they used to fabricate will forsake them. (28:74–75)

When God asks the people about what they did and failed to do, He chooses one of them as a witness and asks him to give an account of a) what they were *expected* to believe and practice, and b) what they *actually* believed and practiced. In this way, the faults of the wrongdoers and those who have gone astray will be exposed. Thus, the role of a witness is that he serves as a standard in this world and hereafter.

- *They confirm those who lie against God.* On the Day of Judgment, the witnesses will confirm those who denied the signs of God and attributed lies to Him:

وَ مَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَى عَلَىَ اللَّهِ كَذِباً أُوْلَئِكَ يُعْرَضُونَ عَلَىَ رَبِّهِمْ وَ يَقُولُ الأَشْهَادُ هَؤلاءِ الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا عَلَىَ رَبِّهِمْ أَلا لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَىَ الظَّالِمِينَ

Who doth more wrong than those who invent a lie against God. They will be turned back to the presence of their Lord, and the witnesses will say, These are the

ones who lied against their Lord! Behold! the Curse of God is on those who do wrong! (11:18)

- *They protect the Divine Books.*

إِنَّا أَنزَلْنَا التَّوْرَٰةَ فِيهَا هُدًى وَ نُورٌ يَحكُمُ بِها النَّبِيُّونَ الَّذِينَ أَسْلَمُوا لِلَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَ الرَّبَّانِيُّونَ وَ الأَحْبَارُ بِمَا اسْتُحْفِظُوا مِن كِتَابِ اللَّهِ وَ كَانُوا عَلَيْهِ شُهَدَاءَ فَلاتَخْشَوُا النَّاسَ وَ اخْشَوْنِ وَ تَشتَرُوا بِايَاتِي ثَمَناً قَلِيلاً وَ مَن لَمْ يَحْكُمْ بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ

We sent down the Torah containing guidance and light. The prophets, who had submitted, judged by it for the Jews, and so did the rabbis and the scribes, as they were charged to preserve the Book of God and were witnesses to it. So do not fear the people, but fear Me, and do not sell My signs for a paltry gain. Those who do not judge by what God has sent down—it is they who are the faithless. (5:44)

The prophets who submitted themselves to God ruled or judged the Jews according to the Torah. Afterwards, God speaks of the people who were given the task of preserving the Torah—"*as they were charged to preserve the Book of God and were witnesses to it.*" These people were witnesses upon the Torah: if the Torah was distorted, they will testify on the Day of Judgment as to whether they dutifully maintained the book, or deliberately destroyed it.

Note that some non-Shi'a scholars assert that the Prophet was the witness of the people of his time and all the future generations until end of this world.[3] However, it can be understood from the Qur'an itself that a witness, in this particular sense, must live amongst the people whom he will witness against. When God asks Prophet Jesus whether he told the people to take him and his mother for gods besides Him, his answer will be:

مَا قُلْتُ لَهُمْ إِلا مَا أَمَرْتَنِى بِهِ أَنِ اعْبُدُواْ اللَّهَ رَبِّى وَ رَبَّكُمْ وَ كُنْتُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَهِيداً ما دُمْتُ فِيهِمْ فَلَمَّا تَوَفَّيْتَنِى كُنتَ أَنتَ الرَّقِيبَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَ أَنتَ عَلى كُل شَىءٍ شَهِيدٌ

I did not say to them [anything] except what You had commanded me [to say] "Worship God, my Lord and your Lord." And I was a witness to them so long as I was among them. But when You had taken me away. You Yourself were watchful over them, and You are witness to all things. (5:117)

Although Jesus did not die, his position as a witness continued only as long as he lived among the people and ended when God raised him and took him away. Thus, there is no way to hold that the Prophet was a witness in this sense for the period after his demise. There must have been a witness after him, and that witness must be

3. Zamakhsharī, Mahmūd, *al-Kashshāf*, vol. 1, p. 199 & 512; vol. 2, p. 628; vol. 3, p. 429

followed by another; and this will continue until end of this world.

At least two verses, 11:17 and 13:43, indicate that Imam Ali was the witness after the Prophet. In what follows, these verses will be examined.

a) A witness from the Prophet (*minhu*)

أَ فَمَن كَانَ عَلىَ بَيِّنَة مِن رَبِّهِ وَ يَتْلُوهُ شَاهِدٌ مِنْهُ وَ مِن قَبْلِهِ كِتَابُ مُوسىَ إِمَاماً وَ رَحْمَةً أُولَئكَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ وَ مَن يَكْفُرْ بِهِ مِنَ الأَحْزَابِ فَالنَّارُ مَوْعِدُهُ فَلاتَكُ فِي مِرْيَة مِنْهُ إِنَّهُ الحَقُّ مِن رَبِّكَ وَ لَكِنَّ أَكْثرَ النَّاسِ لايُؤْمِنُونَ

Is he who stands on a manifest proof from his Lord, and followed by a witness from himself? And before him there was the Book of Moses, a guide and mercy. It is they who have faith in it, and whoever defies him from among the factions, the Fire is their tryst. So do not be in doubt about it; it is the truth from your Lord, but most people do not have faith. (11:17)

The sentence *"Is he who stands on a manifest proof from his Lord"* clearly refers to the Prophet since it is he alone who possesses a manifest proof from His Lord. The line "*and followed by a witness from himself*" must then refer to someone who is a witness from the Prophet, although he is not the Prophet himself given the word "*minhu*" (*from*

himself).[4] Indeed, he comes after (*yatlū*) the Prophet. This person is none other than Imam Ali.

In the following, the Event of Mubāhalah and the revelation of the Chapter *al-Tawbah* are explained to verify that the caliphs were not regarded as *from* the Prophet (*minhu*) apart from Imam Ali. Thus, when God says, "*a witness from himself follows him*" in verse 11:17, this can only refer to Imam Ali.

The Event of Mubāhalah

The Event of Mubāhalah occurred when a group of Christian representatives from Najrān met with Prophet Muhammad on the 10th year of Hijrah. When the people of Najrān deified Jesus and rejected the three Qur'anic verses about him, the Prophet called for a *Mubāhalah*—a meeting in which both sides gather their men, women, and children to pray to God and invoke a curse on those who lie:

فَمَنْ حَاجَّکَ فِيهِ مِن بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَکَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ فَقُلْ تَعَالَوْا نَدْعُ أَبْنَاءَنَا وَ أَبْنَاءَکُمْ وَ نِسَاءَنَا وَ نِسَاءَکُمْ وَ أَنفُسَنَا وَ أَنفُسَکُمْ ثُمَّ نَبْتَهِلْ فَنَجْعَل لَّعْنَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَىَ الْكَاذِبِينَ

Should anyone argue with you concerning him, after the knowledge that has come to you, say, "Come! Let us

4. The word *minhu* (*from him*) has also been used in the Prophet's hadith regarding Imam Ḥusayn: "Ḥusayn is from me and I am from Ḥusayn." Ibn Ḥanbal, Abu Abdillah, *Musnad al-Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, vol. 29, p. 103. no. 17561

> *call our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves, then let us pray earnestly and call down God's curse upon the liars."* (3:61)

The next day, the Prophet took Imam Ḥasan and Ḥusayn as "*our sons,*" Lady Fatima as "*our women,*" and Imam Ali as "*ourselves.*" Imam Ali clearly does not fit into the category of "our sons" and "our women" which means he must have been from "*ourselves,*" an expression that sums up the level of his nearness to the Prophet. Furthermore, no one can claim to be closer to the Prophet than Imam Ali, and he was the sole person qualified enough to represent the Prophet. Sunni scholars likewise agree that those whom the Prophet summoned are none other than Ali, Fatimah, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn.[5]

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5. *al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'an,* vol. 3, p. 223:

و قد أطبق المفسرون و اتفقت الرواية و أيده التاريخ: أن رسول الله (ص) حضر للمباهلة و لم يحضر معه إلا علي و فاطمة و الحسنان (ع)

For Sunni sources one may refer to, for example, Abū al-Ḥusayn 'Asākir al-Dīn, Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, The Book of Merits of Ṣaḥabah, "The Merits of Imam Ali," vol. 4, p. 1871:

وَ لَمَّا نَزَلَتْ هَذِهِ الآيَةُ: فَقُلْ تَعالَوْا نَدْعُ أَبْناءَنا وَ أَبْناءَكُمْ دَعَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلَّمَ عَلِيًّا وَ فَاطِمَةَ وَ حَسَنًا وَ حُسَيْنًا فَقَالَ: «اللَّهُمَّ! هَؤلاءِ أَهْلِي».

Tirmidhī, Muhammad b. 'Isā, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī,* The Book of Merits, "The Merits of Imam Ali," vol. 5, p. 456, no. 3724; Tha'labī, Abū Isḥaq Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm, *al-Kashf wa al-Bayān 'an Tafsīr al-Qur'an,* vol. 3, p. 85; Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn, *Mafātīh al-Ghayb*, vol. 8, p. 247.

The declaration of Chapter al-Tawbah

The Prophet was ordered to reveal the first verses of Surah *al-Tawbah* (*Repentance*) in condemnation to the unbelievers and polytheists in Mecca during the annual Hajj. This involved prohibiting them from entering Masjid al-Ḥarām[6] and asserting that a person cannot enter heaven without being a believer. Additionally, those who entered were no longer permitted to circumambulate the Ka'ba unclothed as this was one of their previous customs.

The Prophet first asked Abu Bakr to deliver it to the people of Mecca. When Abu Bakr set out, he left for a short time until the Prophet instructed Imam Ali to contact Abu Bakr to ask him to return, and Imam Ali would deliver the message himself. The difficulty of being asked to turn back brought Abu Bakr to tears as he supposed that perhaps God revealed something against him personally and thus ordered the Prophet to send him back. The Prophet informed him that there was nothing about him personally, telling him that it was due to a special command of God through Angel Gabriel that no one should perform this duty except him or a man *from him*:

لَنْ يُؤَدِّيَ عَنْكَ إِلا أَنْتَ أَوْ رَجُلٌ مِنْكَ

6. The Grand Mosque that surrounds the Ka'ba in Mecca

No one can communicate this except by you or a man who is from you.[7]

Once again, Imam Ali was chosen as the Prophet's partner to replace him in undertaking the mission given

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7. Ibn Ḥanbal, Abu Abdillah, *Musnad al-Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, vol. 2, Musnad Ali b. Abī Ṭalib, p. 427, no. 1297 and vol. 1, Musnad Abī Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, p. 183:

أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ بَعَثَهُ بِبَرَاءَةٌ لأَهْلِ مَكَّةَ: لا يَحُجُّ بَعْدَ الْعَامِ مُشْرِكٌ، وَلا يَطُوفُ بِالْبَيْتِ عُرْيَانٌ، وَلا يَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ إِلا نَفْسٌ مُسْلِمَةٌ، مَنْ كَانَ بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مُدَّةٌ فَأَجَلُهُ إِلَى مُدَّتِهِ، وَاللَّهُ بَرِيءٌ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ وَرَسُولُهُ. قَالَ: فَسَارَ بِهَا ثَلاثًا، ثُمَّ قَالَ لِعَلِيٍّ، رَضِيَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى عَنْهُ: "الْحَقْهُ فَرُدَّ عَلَيَّ أَبَا بَكْرٍ، وَبَلِّغْهَا أَنْتَ" قَالَ: فَفَعَلَ، قَالَ: فَلَمَّا قَدِمَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَبُو بَكْرٍ بَكَى، قَالَ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، حَدَثَ فِيَّ شَيْءٌ؟ قَالَ: "مَا حَدَثَ فِيكَ إِلا خَيْرٌ، وَلَكِنْ أُمِرْتُ أَنْ لا يُبَلِّغَهُ إِلا أَنَا أَوْ رَجُلٌ مِنِّي"

This event also is mentioned as a part of another hadith with different chain of narrators in the same book vol. 5, p. 178-179, no. 3061:

ثُمَّ بَعَثَ فُلاناً [أي: أبا بكر الصديق رضى اللّه عنه] بِسُورَةِ التَّوْبَةِ، فَبَعَثَ عَلِياً خَلْفَهُ، فَأَخَذَهَا مِنْهُ، قَالَ: "لايَذْهَبُ بِهَا إِلا رَجُلٌ مِنِّي، وَأَنَا مِنْهُ، "قَالَ: وَقَالَ لِبَنِي عَمِّهِ: "أَيُّكُمْ يُوَالِينِي فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ؟، "قَالَ: وَعَلِيٌّ مَعَهُ جَالِسٌ، فَأَبَوْا، فَقَالَ عَلِيٌّ: أَنَا أُوَالِيكَ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ، قَالَ: "أَنْتَ وَلِيِّي فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ،" قَالَ: فَتَرَكَهُ، ثُمَّ أَقْبَلَ عَلَى رَجُلٍ مِنْهُمْ، فَقَالَ: "أَيُّكُمْ يُوَالِينِي فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ؟" فَأَبَوْا، قَالَ: فَقَالَ عَلِيٌّ: أَنَا أُوَالِيكَ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ، فَقَالَ: "أَنْتَ وَلِيِّي فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ"

See also Suyūtī, Jalal al-Dīn, *al-Durr al-Manthūr fī Tafsīr al-Ma'thūr*, vol. 3, p. 209; Zamakhsharī, Mahmūd, *al-Kashshāf*, vol. 2, p. 243.

his divine knowledge and immaculate conduct. And yet again, this event displayed God as the sole decision-maker of whom can perform this prophetic task.

b) A witness who had knowledge of the Book

The following verse also confirms Imam Ali as a witness after Prophet Muhammad:

وَ يَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ لَسْتَ مُرْسَلا قُلْ كَفَى بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا بَيْنِي وَ بَيْنَكُمْ وَ مَنْ عِندَهُ عِلْمُ الْكِتَابِ

The Unbelievers say: "No messenger art thou" Say: "Enough for a witness between me and you is God, and such as have knowledge of the Book." (13:43)

In addition to God, there is a witness, between Prophet Muhammad and the unbelievers, who is introduced as the one who had knowledge of the Book. There is a great difference between having knowledge of the Book (*'ilmul-kitāb*) and having *some* knowledge of the Book (*'ilmun minal-kitāb*). According to the Qur'an, having *some* knowledge of the Book enabled Aṣif ibn Barkhīyā to bring the throne of the Queen of Saba' to Prophet Solomon in a twinkling of an eye:

قَالَ الَّذِى عِندَهُ عِلْمٌ مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ أَنَا ءَاتِيكَ بِهِ قَبْلَ أَن يَرْتَدَّ إِلَيْكَ طَرْفُكَ فَلَمَّا رَءَاهُ مُسْتَقِرًّا عِندَهُ قَالَ هَذَا مِن فَضْلِ رَبِّى لِيَبْلُوَنِى ءَأَشْكُرُ أَمْ أَكْفُرُ وَ مَن شَكَرَ فَإِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهِ وَ مَن كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ رَبِّى غَنِى كَرِيمٌ

> *The one who had some knowledge of the Book said, "I will bring it to you in the twinkling of an eye." So when he saw it set near him, he said, "This is by the grace of my Lord, to test me if I will give thanks or be ungrateful." And whoever gives thanks, gives thanks only for his own sake. And whoever is ungrateful [should know that] my Lord is indeed all-sufficient, all-generous.* (27:40)

If this is what *some* knowledge of the Book can do, one can only imagine the ability of a person who has *complete* knowledge of the Book. Who had knowledge of the Book other than God and the Prophet and was therefore qualified to be a witness between the Prophet and the people of his time?

Apart from the Prophet, Imam Ali undoubtedly surpassed everyone in his wisdom, knowledge, and intelligence. The Prophet said:

> The most knowledgeable person in my nation after me is Ali.[8]

He laid emphasis on heeding to Imam Ali given his sophistication and intellect. The Prophet also said:

> I am the City of Knowledge and Ali is its gate. Whoever wants to enter this city must first pass through its gate.[9]

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8. Hindī, 'Ala al-Dīn Ali al-Muttaqī, *Kanz al-'Ummāl fī Sunan al-Aqwāl wa al-Af'āl,* vol. 11, p. 614, no. 32977. The original text is as follows:
أعلم أمتى من بعدى على بن ابى طالب

Indeed, Imam Ali is a role model for those who have an ardent desire to live and die like the Prophet, and eventually dwell in Paradise.[10]

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9. Ṭabarānī, Abu al-Qāsim Sulaymān b. Aḥmad, *al-Mu'jam al-Kabīr,* vol. 11, pp. 65-66, no. 11061; Hindī, 'Ala al-Dīn Ali al-Muttaqī, *Kanz al-'Ummāl fī Sunan al-Aqwāl wa al-Af'āl,* vol. 11, p. 614, no. 32979; Nayshabūrī, Abū Abdillah al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak 'ala al-Ṣaḥiḥayn,* Kitab Ma'rifah al-Ṣaḥabah, vol. 3, p. 137, no. 4637. The original text is as follows:

أنا مدينة العلم و علي بابها فمن أراد المدينة فليأت الباب

Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal in his book, *Faḍā'il al- Ṣaḥabah,* vol. 2, p. 634, no. 1081:

أَنَا دَارُ الْحِكْمَةِ، وَعَلِيٌّ بَابُهَا

10. Ibn 'Asākir, Ali b. al-Ḥasan, *Tārikh-u Madīnat-i Dimashq*, vol. 42, p. 240, no. 8751; al-Isfahānī Abū Na'īm, *Ḥilyah al-Awliyā*, vol. 1, p. 86;

من سره أن يحيا حياتي، ويموت مماتي، ويسكن جنة عدن غرسها ربي، فليوال عليا من بعدي وليوال وليه، وليقتد بأهل بيتي من بعدي، فإنهم عترتي خلقوا من طينتي، ورزقوا فهمي وعلمي، فويل للمكذبين بفضلهم من أمتي، القاطعين فيهم صلتي، لا أنالهم الله شفاعتي.

Whoever becomes glad and happy with a life like my life and with a death like my death and with dwelling in the everlasting paradise of my Lord, must have *wilayah* (guardianship) of Ali and wīlayah of those who have his wilāyah, and follows my household after me, because they are my progeny, they have been created from my clay, and they have been given my knowledge and understanding. Grievous is the one from my nation who denies their merits, and cut the relation between me and them. May God not grant them my intercession.

Another version of this hadith can be found in al-Ṭabarānī, Abu al-Qāsim Sulaymān b. Aḥmad, *al-Mu'jam al-Kabīr,* vol. 5, p. 194, no. 5067:

مَنْ أَحَبَّ أَنْ يَحْيَى حَيَاتِى وَيَمُوتَ مَوْتَتِى وَيَسْكُنَ جَنَّةَ الْخُلْدِ الَّتِى وَعَدَنِى رَبِّى، فَإِنَّ رَبِّى عَزَّ وَجَلَّ غَرَسَ قَضْبَانَهَا بِيَدِهِ فَلْيَتَوَلَّ عَلِيَّ بْنَ أَبِى طَالِبٍ رَضِىَ اللهُ عَنْهُ، فَإِنَّهُ لَنْ يُخْرِجَكُمْ مِنْ هُدًى وَلَنْ يُدْخِلَكُمْ فِى ضَلَالَةٍ.

al-Khawārazmī, al-Muwaffiq, *al-Manāqib,* p. 76:

من أحب أن يحيى حياتى ويموت مماتى ويدخل الجنة التى وعدنى ربى، فليتول على بن أبى طالب ، وذريته ائمة الهدى ومصابيح الدجى من بعده، فانهم لن يخرجوكم من باب الهدى إلى باب الضلالة

al-Ḥindī, 'Ala al-Dīn Ali al-Muttaqī, *Kanz al-'Ummāl fī Sunan al-Aqwāl wa al-Af'āl,* vol. 11, p. 611, no. 32959:

من أحب أن يحيى حياتى ويموت موتى ويسكن جنة الخلد التى وعدنى ربى فإن ربى عز وجل غرس قضبانها بيده فليتول على بن أبى طالب فإنه لن يخرجكم من هدى ولن يدخلكم فى ضلالة.

Ibid., vol. 11, p. 611, no. 32960:

من أحب أن يحيى حياتى ويموت ميتتى ويدخل الجنة التى وعدنى ربى قضبانا من قضبانها غرسها بيده وهى جنة الخلد فليتول عليا وذريته من بعده فإنهم لن يخرجوكم من باب هدى ولن يدخلوكم فى باب ضلالة.

Al-'Asqalānī, Abū al-Faḍl Aḥmad b. Ali, *al-Iṣābah fī Tamyīz al-Ṣaḥabah,* vol. 2, p. 485, no. 2872:

من أحبّ أن يحيا حياتى ويموت ميتتى ويدخل الجنّة فليتولّ عليّا وذرّيته من بعده

It should be noted that unfortunately some Sunni writers have tried to question the authenticity of the last version of this hadith. For example, Ibn Ḥajar in his *al-Iṣābah* vol. 2, p. 485, questions the chain of narration for this hadith because of the weakness of Yahyā ibn

Given his knowledge and perceptiveness, Imam Ali upholds the mission of protecting the Book. Moreover, his governance is precisely based on the Qur'an, rendering him the only person to be taken as a standard in understanding Islam and its guidelines, upholding the actual task of protecting the Book, and judging and ruling according to the Book after the Prophet.

3. The Verse of Propagation (*Tablīgh*)

يَاأَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِن رَّبِّكَ وَ إِن لَّمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رِسَالَتَهُ وَ اللَّهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لايهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ

O Messenger! proclaim the (message) which has been sent to you from Your Lord. If you do not, you would not have proclaimed and fulfilled His mission. And Allah will protect you from the people. For Allah does not guide the faithless lot. (5:67)

According to Shi'a and some Sunni[11] sources, this verse was revealed on the 18th of Dhil Hijjah at Ghadīr

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'Ya'lā, while both Muslim and Bukhāri have trusted him and narrated hadiths from him. People like Dhahabī have also taken his trustworthiness out of question.

11. Suyūtī, Jalal al-Dīn, *al-Durr al-Manthūr fī Tafsīr al-Ma'thūr*, vol. 2, p. 298; *al-Manāqib*, p. 7; Ibn 'Asākir, Abu al-Qāsim Ali b. al-Ḥasan, *Tārikh-u Madīnat-i Dimashq*, vol. 42, p. 237; Tha'labī, Abū Isḥāq Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm, *al-Kashf wa al-Bayān 'an Tafsīr al-Qur'an,* vol. 4, p. 92

Khumm,[12] when the Prophet Muhammad returned from his final hajj pilgrimage with roughly 114,000 of his companions. Interestingly, the verse and hadiths hint that the Prophet was reluctant to make the announcement because he knew that if he declared Ali as the Imam in this public gathering, many would resist. For this reason, God speaks to him strongly—that if he does not proclaim this to the people, he would not have accomplished his duty.

Hadith of Ghadīr Khumm

Hadith of Ghadīr has been mentioned in numerous Shi'a and Sunni sources through various chains of narrators. According to al-Ṭabarī who quotes from the well-known companion of Prophet Muhammad, Zaid ibn Arqam, and including other sources, the event occurred as follows: When the Prophet reached Ghadīr Khumm, he stopped there during midday while the winds were scorching hot. He asked those traveling with him to stop, and the ones who had already passed that point to return. They also waited until those still behind reached them, and then together prepared for prayer. Afterwards, the Prophet delivered a sermon, in which he said:

> God has revealed to me: "*O Messenger! Proclaim the (message) which has been sent to you from Your Lord. If you do not, you would not have proclaimed and fulfilled His mission. And Allah will protect you*

12. Located near the city of al-Juhfah, in present day Saudi Arabia

from the people. For Allah does not guide the faithless lot." (5:67).

The Prophet then said, "Gabriel has brought me a command from my Lord to stop here and announce to all people, black or white, that Ali, the son of Abī Ṭalib, is my son, my *waṣīy*, my successor, and my caliph and Imam after me."

Then Zaid ibn Arqam said:

> The Prophet continued, "God appointed Ali as your master and Imam and made obedience to Ali compulsory for all people. All people must obey Ali. Thus, whatever he commands must be performed and whatever he says must be accepted. Whoever disobeys him is cursed. And God's mercy is upon the one who accepts him and confirms what he says. Listen to him and obey him. Surely God is your master, and Ali is your Imam. The imams of my offspring will be through Ali and his children up until the Day of Resurrection."

Afterwards, the Prophet raised Imam Ali's hand so that the Imam was visible to all those who stood there, and said, "Oh people! This is my brother, my successor, the one who has grasped my knowledge. He is like a container for my knowledge, and he is my successor for those who believe in me."[13]

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13. *Al-Wilāyah* by Ṭabarī, cited in, Amīnī Najafī, 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Aḥmad, *al-Ghadīr fi al-Kitāb wa al-Sunnah wa al-Adab,* vol. 1, p. 424-425. The original text is as follows:

الحافظ أبو جعفر محمد بن جرير الطبرى أخرج بإسناده فى – كتاب الولاية فى طرق حديث الغدير – عن زيد بن أرقم قال لما نزل النبى (صلى الله عليه وسلم) بغدير خم فى رجوعه من حجة الوداع وكان فى وقت الضحى و حر شديد أمر بالدوحات فقمت و نادى الصلاة جامعة فاجتمعنا فخطب خطبة بالغة ثم قال: إن الله تعالى أنزل إلى: بلغ ما أنزل إليک من ربک وإن لم تفعل فما بلغت رسالته والله يعصمک من الناس، وقد أمرنى جبرئيل عن ربى أن أقوم فى هذا المشهد وأعلم كل أبيض وأسود: إن على بن أبى طالب أخى ووصيى وخليفتى والإمام بعدى، ... ذلک: فإن الله قد نصبه لكم وليا وإماما، وفرض طاعته على كل أحد، ماض حكمه، جائز قوله، ملعون من خالفه، مرحوم من صدقه، إسمعوا وأطيعوا، فإن الله مولاكم وعلى إمامكم، ثم الإمامة فى ولدى من صلبه إلى القيامة ... ثم رفعه إلى السماء حتى صارت رجله مع ركبة النبى (صلى الله عليه وسلم) وقال: معاشر الناس ؟ هذا أخى ووصيى وواعى علمى وخليفتى على من آمن بى وعلى: تفسير كتاب ربى .

For more Sunni sources one may refer to Ibn Ḥanbal, Abu Abdillah, *Musnad al-Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, vol. 32, p. 73-74, no. 19325:

عَنْ مَيْمُونٍ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ قَالَ: قَالَ زَيْدُ بْنُ أَرْقَمَ وَأَنَا أَسْمَعُ: نَزَلْنَا مَعَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ بِوَادٍ يُقَالُ لَهُ وَادِي خُمٍّ فَأَمَرَ بِالصَّلاةِ فَصَلاهَا بِهَجِيرٍ، قَالَ: فَخَطَبَنَا، وَظُلِّلَ لِرَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ بِثَوْبٍ عَلَى شَجَرَةٍ سَمُرَةٍ مِنَ الشَّمْسِ، فَقَالَ: "أَلَسْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ، أَوْ أَلَسْتُمْ تَشْهَدُونَ، أَنِّي أَوْلَى بِكُلِّ مُؤْمِنٍ مِنْ نَفْسِهِ؟ "قَالُوا: بَلَى، قَالَ: "فَمَنْ كُنْتُ مَوْلاهُ، فَإِنَّ عَلِيًّا مَوْلاهُ، اللَّهُمَّ وَالِ مَنْ وَالاهُ وَعَادِ مَنْ عَادَاهُ.

Nayshabūrī, Abu Abdillah al-Hākim, *al-Mustadrak 'ala al- Ṣaḥiḥayn*, vol. 3, p. 118, no. 4576:

Tha'labī, another Sunni scholar, narrates a hadith regarding the context of the first two verses of the Chapter *Ma'ārij* (*The Ascension*):

عَنْ زَيْدِ بْنِ أَرْقَمَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: لَمَّا رَجَعَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مِنْ حَجَّةِ الْوَدَاعِ وَنَزَلَ غَدِيرَ خُمٍّ أَمَرَ بِدَوْحَاتٍ فَقُمْنَ، فَقَالَ: «كَأَنِّي قَدْ دُعِيتُ فَأَجَبْتُ، إِنِّي قَدْ تَرَكْتُ فِيكُمُ الثَّقَلَيْنِ: أَحَدُهُمَا أَكْبَرُ مِنَ الآخَرِ، كِتَابُ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى، وَعِتْرَتِي، فَانْظُرُوا كَيْفَ تَخْلُفُونِي فِيهِمَا، فَإِنَّهُمَا لَنْ يَتَفَرَّقَا حَتَّى يَرِدَا عَلَيَّ الْحَوْضَ» ثُمَّ قَالَ: «إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ مَوْلَايَ، وَأَنَا مَوْلَى كُلِّ مُؤْمِنٍ»، ثُمَّ أَخَذَ بِيَدِ عَلِيٍّ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ، فَقَالَ: «مَنْ كُنْتُ مَوْلَاهُ فَهَذَا وَلِيُّهُ، اللَّهُمَّ وَالِ مَنْ وَالَاهُ وَعَادِ مَنْ عَادَاهُ.»

Haythamī, Ali b. Abu Bakr, *Majma' al-Zawā'id wa Manba' al-Fawā'id*, vol. 9, p. 104, no. 14611:

عَنْ عَمْرٍو ذِي مُرٍّ، وَزَيْدِ بْنِ أَرْقَمَ قَالا: خَطَبَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ – صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ – يَوْمَ غَدِيرِ خُمٍّ، فَقَالَ: "مَنْ كُنْتُ مَوْلاهُ فَعَلِيٌّ مَوْلاهُ، اللَّهُمَّ وَالِ مَنْ وَالاهُ، وَعَادِ مَنْ عَادَاهُ، وَانْصُرْ مَنْ نَصَرَهُ، وَأَعِنْ مَنْ أَعَانَهُ."

Nisā'ī, Aḥmad b. Shu'ayb, *Khaṣā'iṣ*, p. 96, no. 79:

عَن زيد بن أرقم قَالَ: لما رَجَعَ رَسُول الله صلى الله عَلَيْهِ وَسلم عَن حجَّة الْوَدَاع ونَزل غَدِير خم أمر بدوحات فقمن ثمَّ قَالَ: «كَأَنِّي قد دعيت فأجبت وَإِنِّي قد تركت فِيكُم الثقلَيْن أحدهمَا أكبر من الآخر كتاب الله وعترتي أهل بَيْتِي فانظروا كَيفَ تخلفوني فيهمَا فَإِنَّهُمَا لن يَتَفَرَّقَا حَتَّى يردا على الْحَوْض.» ثمَّ قَالَ: «إِن الله مولايَ وَأَنا ولي كل مُؤمن.» ثمَّ أَخذ بيد عَليّ فَقَالَ: «من كنت وليه فَهَذَا وليه اللَّهُمَّ وَال من وَالاهُ وَعَاد من عَادَاهُ» فَقلت لزيد: سمعته من رَسُول الله صلى الله عَلَيْهِ وَسلم فَقَالَ: مَا كَانَ فِي الدوحات أحد إِلا رَآهُ بِعَيْنِيهِ وسَمعه بأذنيه.

سَأَلَ سَائِلٌ بِعَذَابٍ وَاقِعٍ لِلْكَافِرِينَ لَيْسَ لَهُ دَافِعٌ

An asker asked for a punishment bound to befall which none can avert from the faithless. (70:1–2)

This verse was revealed after the Prophet gathered the people on the Day of Ghadīr and told them to believe in the imamate of Ali and pay allegiance to him. Al-Harth, son of Nu'mān, heard of Imam Ali's appointment; he approached the Prophet on his camel, came down, and asked:

> Oh Prophet, you asked us to declare that there is no God but God and that you are His Prophet, to say our prayers five times a day, to pay *zakat*, to fast during the Month of Ramadhan, and to perform the Hajj pilgrimage. And we accepted to perform these duties. However, you are still not satisfied with this until you raised your cousin's hand and asked us to believe in him and you said, "Whomever I am his leader, Ali is also his leader." Is this information from you or God?[14]

The Prophet replied, "By God who has no partner, there is no God but Him, verily this is from God." Al-Harth then turned back, remounted his camel, and said, "My Lord, if what Prophet Muhammad says is true, rain down upon us stones from the sky, or bring us a painful

14 . Bearing in mind the supposition was that Imam Ali's appointment was the Prophet's personal plea.

punishment." On his way back, a stone came from the heavens, hit his head, and he was eventually killed. Afterwards, the first two verses of the Chapter *Ma'ārij* were revealed on account of, al-Harth, the disbeliever, who asked for the punishment.[15]

The part of the verse "*and God will protect you from the people*" (5:67) was said due to the Prophet's apprehension

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15. Tha'labī, Abū Isḥāq Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm, *al-Kashf wa al-Bayān 'an Tafsīr al-Qur'an,* vol. 10, p. 35. Full text in Arabic is as follows:

عن جعفر بن محمد عن آبائه، فقال: لما كان رسول الله صلّى اللّه عليه و سلّم بغدير خم، نادى بالناس فاجتمعوا، فأخذ بيد عليّ رضى اللّه عنه فقال: «من كنت مولاه فعليّ مولاه» فشاع ذلک و طار فى البلاد، فبلغ ذلک الحرث بن النعمان القهرى فأتى رسول الله صلّى اللّه عليه و سلّم على ناقة له حتّى أتى الأبطح، فنزل عن ناقته و أناخها و عقلها، ثمّ أتى النبيّ صلّى اللّه عليه و سلّم و هو فى ملأ من أصحابه فقال: يا محمد أمرتنا عن الله أن نشهد أن لا إله إلا الله و أنّک رسول الله فقبلناه منک، و أمرتنا أن نصلّى خمسا فقبلناه منک، و أمرتنا بالزكاة فقبلنا، و أمرتنا بالحجّ فقبلنا، و أمرتنا أن نصوم شهرا فقبلنا، ثمّ لم ترض بهذا حتّى رفعت بضبعى ابن عمّک ففضلته علينا و قلت: «من كنت مولاه فعلى مولاه،» فهذا شىء منک أم من الله تعالى؟ فقال: «و الّذى لا إله إلا هو هذا من الله» فولّى الحرث بن النعمان يريد راحلته و هو يقول: اللهمّ إن كان ما يقوله حقا فَأَمْطِرْ عَلَيْنا حِجارَةً مِنَ السَّماءِ، أَوِ ائْتِنا بِعَذابٍ أَلِيمٍ، فما وصل إليها حتّى رماه الله بحجر فسقط على هامته و خرج من دبره فقتله، و أنزل الله سبحانه: "سَأَلَ سائِلٌ بِعَذابٍ واقِعٍ لِلْكافِرِينَ لَيْسَ لَهُ دافِعٌ."

over those who may rise against Islam and consequently end it completely. There were people who did not want Ali to be the Imam and were counting the days the Prophet would die as they wanted to seize the power. And thus, God reassures the Prophet of His protection; there is no other reason why He would do so if rejection of Ali's imamate was unlikely. As seen in the above anecdote, al-Harth was prepared to die rather than believe in Ali as the successor.

After God's command, the Prophet made the announcement, and the people, including the first and second caliph, paid allegiance to Ali and congratulated him. The second caliph even said, "Well done, O Ali. You have become my master and the master of all the believers, male and female."[16]

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16. Amīnī Najafī, 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Aḥmad, *al-Ghadīr fi al-Kitāb wa al-Sunnah wa al-Adab,* vol. 1, p. 35.The original text is as follows:

قال: إن الله مولاى وأنا مولى المؤمنين وأنا أولى بهم من أنفسهم فمن كنت مولاه فعلى مولاه، يقولها ثلث مرات، وفى لفظ أحمد إمام الحنابلة: أربع مرات ثم قال: أللهم وال من والاه، وعاد من عاداه، وأحب من أحبه، وأبغض من أبغضه، وانصر من نصره، واخذل من خذله، وأدر الحق معه حيث دار، ألا فليبلغ الشاهد الغايب، ثم لم يتفرقوا حتى نزل أمين وحى الله بقوله: (اليوم أكملت لكم دينكم وأتممت عليكم نعمتى) الآية. فقال رسول الله (ص): الله أكبر على إكمال الدين، وإتمام النعمة، ورضى الرب برسالتى، والولاية لعلى من بعدى، ثم طفق القوم يهنئون أمير المؤمنين (صلوات الله عليه) ومن

The controversy that surrounds this hadith is not in its authenticity or in the narration of the event, but rather

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هناء في مقدم الصحابة: الشيخان أبو بكر وعمر كل يقول: بخ بخ لک يا بن أبي طالب أصبحت وأمسيت مولاي ومولى كل مؤمن ومؤمنة.

For Sunni sources see Ibn Ḥanbal, Abu Abdillah, *Musnad al-Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, vol. 30, p. 430, no. 18479:

عَنِ الْبَرَاءِ بْنِ عَازِبٍ، قَالَ: كُنَّا مَعَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فِي سَفَرٍ، فَنَزَلْنَا بِغَدِيرِ خُمٍّ، فَنُودِيَ فِينَا: الصَّلاةُ جَامِعَةٌ، وَكُسِحَ لِرَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ تَحْتَ شَجَرَتَيْنِ، فَصَلَّى الظُّهْرَ، وَأَخَذَ بِيَدِ عَلِيٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ، فَقَالَ: "أَلَسْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ أَنِّي أَوْلَى بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ؟" قَالُوا: بَلَى، قَالَ: "أَلَسْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ أَنِّي أَوْلَى بِكُلِّ مُؤْمِنٍ مِنْ نَفْسِهِ؟" قَالُوا: بَلَى، قَالَ: فَأَخَذَ بِيَدِ عَلِيٍّ، فَقَالَ: "مَنْ كُنْتُ مَوْلاهُ، فَعَلِيٌّ مَوْلاهُ، اللَّهُمَّ وَالِ مَنْ وَالاهُ، وَعَادِ مَنْ عَادَاهُ" قَالَ: فَلَقِيَهُ عُمَرُ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ، فَقَالَ: "لَهُ هَنِيئًا يَا ابْنَ أَبِي طَالِبٍ، أَصْبَحْتَ وَأَمْسَيْتَ مَوْلَى كُلِّ مُؤْمِنٍ، وَمُؤْمِنَةٍ."

Ibn ʻAsākir, Abū al-Qāsim Ali b. al-Ḥasan, *Tārikh-u Madinat-i Dimashq*, vol. 42, p. 222:

عن البراء قال لما أقبلنا مع رسول الله (صلى الله عليه وسلم) في حجة الوداع حتى إذا كنا بغدير خم فنودى فينا الصلاة جامعة وكسح للنبي (صلى الله عليه وسلم) تحت شجرتين فأخذ النبي (صلى الله عليه وسلم) بيد علي ثم قال: «ألست أولى بالمؤمنين بكل مؤمن من نفسه» فقال أحدهما [يعني احد راويي الحديث]: «أليست أزواجي أمهاتكم» قالوا: بلى. فقال رسول الله (صلى الله عليه وسلم): «فإن هذا مولى من أنا مولاه اللهم وال من والاه وعاد من عاداه» قال: قال لقيه عمر بعد ذلک فقال: هنيئا لک يا ابن أبي طالب أصبحت وأمسيت مولى كل مؤمن ومؤمنة.

in how people choose to interpret the word *mawlā* as either "master" or "friend." Our Sunni brothers prefer the latter.

Even if we were to assume that by *mawlā*, he meant "friend", the very fact that the Prophet asked thousands of Muslims to gather together in the heat of the midday desert sun only to proclaim that Ali is his friend should be sufficient to tell us that we must follow him.

4. The Verse of Perfecting the Religion

Nonetheless, after they paid allegiance, God revealed the following verse:

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةُ وَ الدَّمُ وَ لَحْمُ الخِنزِيرِ وَ مَا أُهِلَّ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ بِهِ وَ الْمُنْخَنِقَةُ وَ الْمَوْقُوذَةُ وَ الْمُتَرَدِّيَةُ وَ النَّطِيحَةُ وَ مَا أَكَلَ السَّبُعُ إِلا مَا ذَكَّيْتُمْ وَ مَا ذُبِحَ عَلَىَ النُّصُبِ وَ أَن تَسْتَقْسِمُوا بِالأَزْلامِ ذَالِكُمْ فِسْقٌ.

You are prohibited carrion, blood, the flesh of swine, and what has been offered to other than Allah, and the animal strangled or beaten to death, and that which dies by falling or is gored to death, and that which is mangled by a beast of prey —barring that which you may purify — and what is sacrificed on stone altars [to idols], and that you should divide by raffling with arrows. All that is transgression.

الْيَوْمَ يَئِسَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِن دِينِكُمْ فَلاتخْشَوْهُمْ وَ اخْشَوْنِ الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَ أَتمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَ رَضِيتُ

لَكُمُ الاسْلامَ دِيناً فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ فِي مَخْمَصَةٍ غَيْرَ مُتَجَانِفٍ لاِثْمٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

Today the faithless have despaired of your religion. So do not fear them, but fear Me. Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessing upon you, and I have approved Islam as your religion. But should anyone be compelled by hunger, without inclining to sin, then Allah is indeed all-forgiving, all-merciful. Today the faithless have despaired of your religion. So do not fear them, but fear Me. Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessing upon you, and I have approved Islam as your religion. But should anyone be compelled by hunger, without inclining to sin, then God is indeed all-forgiving, all-merciful. (5:3)

The beginning of this verse points toward the prohibited foods. Afterwards, God describes the important event, and then He continues describing the prohibited foods. The verse ends with telling people that if they have nothing to eat except some prohibited (*non-halāl*) meat, then it is permissible to eat it when their own lives are in danger.

In the middle of the above verse, God opens the brackets and says, "*Today I have completed My blessing upon you, and I have approved Islam as your religion*" and then continues with mentioning prohibited foods. A similar style is seen in the Verse of Purification where the line about the Ahl al-Bayt does not seem to match the context

as it is buried within the verse.[17] Perhaps this due to the possibility of the enemies distorting the Qur'an because of the open declaration of Imam Ali's appointment. Indeed, recording and preserving hadiths were later banned during the companion's caliphate as many of the hadiths honoured Imam Ali and the Ahl al-Bayt. Moreover, another reason may be that placing the sentences out of context in the verse is to test the believers.

The verse "Today the faithless have despaired of your religion...Today I have perfected your religion for you...and I have approved Islam as your religion," (5:3) refers to the completion and perfection of the religion since the Day of Ghadīr; its strength is undeniable, rendering Islam indestructible. Though a corrupt action from a Muslim can no doubt harm Islam, it can never be uprooted.

Moving on, the phrase "*fear me*" reminds people to observe their actions and their God-given blessings, and then fear that perchance any wrongdoing may result in the same blessings being taken away. It essentially means "fear yourselves", that is, if people do something wrong, they will suffer the consequences of their own actions. Consider the verses that imply the same idea:

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17. *"Stay in your houses and do not display your finery with the display of the former [days of] ignorance. Maintain the prayer and pay the zakat, and obey Allah and His Apostle. Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification."* (33:33)

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لاَيُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتىَ يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنفُسِهِمْ

Indeed God does not change a people's lot, unless they change what is in their souls. (13:11)

ذَالِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَمْ يَكُ مُغَيِّراً نِعْمَةً أَنْعَمَهَا عَلىَ قَوْمٍ حَتىَ

يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنفُسِهِمْ وَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

That is because God never changes a blessing that He has bestowed on a people unless they change what is in their own souls, and God is all-hearing, all-knowing. (8:53)

God will not strip away His blessings unless a person has changed for the worse; likewise, if God gives the blessing of Islam, or imamate, He will not seize it unless the people commit immoral actions.

Reflecting on the history of Islam and Muslims, we realize the damage done to Islam by some Muslims. On the other hand, the truth is that the enemies of Islam never managed to refute or defeat it. All that they did essentially strengthened Islam. Verse 5:3 indicates that without imamate, Islam cannot be firm, because it was only after imamate was declared publicly that God said, *"Today the faithless have despaired of your religion."* Even though the Prophet had mentioned Imam Ali's successorship several times before the Day of Ghadīr, the significance of this event still verified his leadership. And afterwards, those who counted the days to defeat Islam

lost hope as they now knew Islam would not terminate with the death of the Prophet. There would surely exist someone who would protect Islam afterwards.

Up until that day, Islam was neither perfected nor sufficient. Islam before imamate did not entirely please God just yet; it was on the Day of Ghadīr—when Islam was perfected—that God was pleased with it.

Why doesn't God say, "*Today I have* completed *your religion*" instead of "perfected *your religion*"? In Arabic, we have the terms "complete" (*tamām*) and "perfect" (*kamāl*). Something incomplete means there are necessary parts missing from it. A house with all the required facilities, such as walls, doors, and windows that is does not include the final touches can be complete, but not perfect; on the other hand, an imperfect home may have all the necessary parts, although an additional feature is needed in order to make it useful. Imamate is one of God's blessings that perfects Islam's list of requirements. Imamate is the spirit of Islam: without it, Islam is like a body with all the organs, but lacks a life-force since it has no soul.

Verse 5:3 indicates that imamate must have occurred at the end of the Prophet's life, and it must be related to a great turn in history; hence, its deliverance is of utmost importance. They believe that the verse of Propagation was revealed on the same day—the Day of Ghadīr—

although some of our Sunni brothers believe it to have been revealed on the day of *'Arafah.*[18]

Thus, God told the Prophet to "*proclaim that which has been sent down to you.*" When the Prophet asked the people to pledge allegiance, and God said, *"Today I have perfected your religion for you,"* he implied that all the details of Islam had been explained while only one final aspect was missing, rendering Islam imperfect until the revelation of this verse. Its revelation must have occurred after everything was explained to the people except for one principle, which stands equal to all else, and that can only be imamate.

Imamate: Completion of the mission (risālah)

The Prophet did his utmost to present the message of God to the people. The *risālah* includes delivering all that was revealed in the Qur'an, as well as the hardships the Prophet underwent to guide the Muslims. Upon reading the verse, "*Say, I do not ask you any reward for it except love of*

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18. Bukhārī, Muhammad b. Ismāeil, *Ṣaḥiḥ al-Bukhārī*, vol. 1, p. 44. The original text is as follows:

عَنْ عُمَرَ بْنِ الْخَطَّابِ: «أَنَّ رَجُلا مِنَ الْيَهُودِ قَالَ لَهُ: يَا أَمِيرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ، آيَةٌ فِي كِتَابِكُمْ تَقْرَءُونَهَا، لَوْ عَلَيْنَا مَعْشَرَ الْيَهُودِ نَزَلَتْ لاتَّخَذْنَا ذَلِكَ الْيَوْمَ عِيدًا، قَالَ: أَيُّ آيَةٍ؟ قَالَ: «الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ، وَ أَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي، وَ رَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الإِسْلامَ دِينًا» قَالَ عُمَرُ: قَدْ عَرَفْنَا ذَلِكَ الْيَوْمَ، وَ الْمَكَانَ الَّذِي نَزَلَتْ فِيهِ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلَّمَ، وَ هُوَ قَائِمٌ بِعَرَفَةَ يَوْمَ جُمُعَةٍ.

[my] relatives," (42:23) we want to repay the Prophet, or give him a reward (*ajr*). He says he does not ask for reward, but if we want to gain proximity to God, if we really want to give Him something, we must love His Ahl al-Bayt. This is the right path.

If love for the Ahl al-Bayt can be accepted as a reward, then it must be proportionate to the *risālah*. It is a profound idea to say that imamate weighs the same as risālah. Love on its own is not enough; imamate is equal to risālah because it is how one ensures that the risālah is not lost. And as the Prophet was a "path" (*sabīl*),[19] an imam is also inherently a *sabīl*. For this reason, God tells the Prophet to "*proclaim that which has been sent down, ... if you do not, you will not have fulfil and proclaimed His message...*" To paraphrase, God tells the Prophet, "If you do not declare the imamate of Ali, you have not performed your mission."

To restate, the *risālah* would not have been fulfilled if imamate was not declared. And if imamate was not declared, the complete message would not have been conveyed. Believing in imamate and love of the Ahl al-Bayt is not merely carrying out actions such as fasting, prayer, charity and pilgrimage to Mecca, because these commands are only part of the risālah. You may have all of Islam, but without imamate, the spirit of Islam, Islam

19. *A day when the wrongdoer will bite his hands, saying, 'I wish I had followed the Apostle's way!'* (25:27)

is incomplete. For this reason, love for Ahl al-Bayt can be taken as reward (*ajr*) for risālah. Of course, this *ajr* is different from customary ones. It is not giving a gift in return to his services; rather, it is like taking advantage of a teacher's instruction to please him or her. Studying well becomes your *ajr* for that teacher. Thus, sometimes *ajr* refers to a person's accomplishments. The payment for the Prophet delivering the message was to believe in imamate so that his message would be appreciated and preserved.

5. The Verse of *Tā'ah*

Muslims are commanded to obey God, the Prophet, and the *ulul amr* or "*those vested with authority*":

يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَ أَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَ أُولِي الأَمْرِ مِنكُمْ فَإِن تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَ الرَّسُولِ إِن كُنتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَ الْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ ذَالِكَ خَيرٌ وَ أَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلاً

O you who have faith! Obey God and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you. And if you dispute concerning anything, refer it to God and the Apostle, if you have faith in God and the Last Day. That is better and more favourable in outcome. (4:59)

As this verse was addressed to the Muslims during that time, they were commanded to obey "*those vested with authority,*" who are none other than the Infallibles for reasons mentioned in chapter 8. An *ulul amr* existing

during that era verifies that a deputy of the Prophet existed whom the Muslims recognized.

وَ إِذَا جَاءَهُمْ أَمْرٌ مِنَ الأَمْنِ أَوِ الْخَوْفِ أَذَاعُوا بِهِ وَ لَوْ رَدُّوهُ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ وَ إِلَى أُولِي الأَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنبِطُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ وَ لَوْلا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَ رَحْمَتُهُ لاَتَّبَعْتُمُ الشَّيْطَانَ إِلا قَلِيلاً

When a report of safety or alarm comes to them, they immediately broadcast it; but had they referred it to the Apostle or to those vested with authority among them, those of them who investigate would have ascertained it. And were it not for God's grace upon you and His mercy, you would have surely followed Satan, [all] except a few. (4:83)

Again, the words "*...those vested with authority among them, those of them who investigate would have ascertained it*" indicates that Imam Ali was known during that period as the Prophet's representative and the legitimate future leader.

6. Imam Ali as a *walī* (guardian)

قُلِ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثُواْ لَهُ غَيْبُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَ الأَرْضِ أَبْصِرْ بِهِ وَ أَسْمِعْ مَا لَهُم مِن دُونِهِ مِن وَلِي وَ لا يُشْرِكُ فِي حُكْمِهِ أَحَداً

Say, "God knows best how long they remained. To Him belongs the Unseen of the heavens and the earth. How well does He see! How well does He hear! They

have no guardian besides Him, and none shares with Him in His judgment." (18:26)

إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللَّهُ وَ رَسُولُهُ وَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَوةَ وَ يُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَوةَ وَ هُمْ رَاكِعُونَ وَ مَن يَتَوَلَّ اللَّهَ وَ رَسُولَهُ وَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ فَإِنَّ حِزْبَ اللَّهِ هُمُ الْغَالِبُونَ

Your guardian is only Allah, His Apostle, and those who believe, who maintain the prayer and give the charity while bowing down. Whoever takes for his guardians God, His Apostle and the faithful [should know that] the confederates of God are indeed the victorious. (5:55–56)

Walī (guardian) comes from the root *wilāyah* (guardianship), and *wilāyah* refers to the leadership that belongs to God, as He gives this to whomsoever He pleases. It is a special relationship between a legitimate leader and a community that excludes outsiders who are not a part of the community of faith.

Here, *walī* does not merely mean "friend," because anyone can be a friend, and the criteria for friendship is not specified in the verse. Also, to be mere friends does not qualify for becoming a confederate of God.

The phrase "*those who believe*" refers to Imam Ali, and the "*those who believe, who maintain the prayer and give the charity while bowing down*" denotes a particular event in which Imam Ali gave charity while bowing in prayer. This action does not apply to all believers given that there is no verse or narration that recommends people to give

charity while bowing. *Wilāyah* (guardianship) first belongs to God, then the Prophet, and afterwards to whomever is appointed by God. Otherwise, God would have stated that whoever is appointed by the people can be a legitimate leader.

Chapter 10

Imam Ali's Successorship in the Hadiths

There is a plethora of narrations that refer to the authenticity of Imam Ali's imamate. Since citing all hadiths is beyond the constraints of this book, we restrict ourselves to the well-known hadiths that are *mutawātir*—successive narrations conveyed by a considerable number of narrators through multiple chains that its authenticity is unquestionable—such as *Hadith al-Manzilah, Hadith al-Dār, Hadith al-Tayr, Hadith al-Wilāyah, Hadith al-Ghadīr, Hadith al-Safīnah*, and *Hadith of the Stars.*

The Tradition of the House (*Hadith al-Dār*)

When the Prophet began his call to Islam, he did not publicly invite people to embrace it until the third year of revelation, when the following verse was revealed:

وَ أَنذِرْ عَشِيرَتَكَ الأَقْرَبِينَ

And Warn the nearest of your kinsfolk. (42:214)

To prepare for this first public invitation to Islam, Imam Ali was asked to help prepare a meal and invite all the Prophet's relatives. During this event, his uncle, Abū Lahab, intentionally prevented the Prophet from delivering the message by repeatedly poking fun and calling him a magician. Nonetheless, the Prophet declared his mission:

> O sons of Abdul Muṭṭalib! I have brought you something that guarantees your goodness in this world and in the hereafter. My Lord has asked me to invite you to believe in this. Who among you is prepared to assist me to be my brother, successor, and caliph?

All kept silent. It was only Imam Ali, the youngest one among them, who said, "O Prophet of God. I am your assistant. I am your partner. I am the one who will support you."

The Prophet placed his hand on Imam Ali's neck to show that what he is going to say exclusively refers to Imam Ali. He said, "This is my brother, my successor, and my caliph. Listen to him and obey him."[1]

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1. Ṭabarī, Abū Ja'far Muhammad b. Jarīr, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, vol. 2, pp. 319-321. Full text in Arabic is as follows:

عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ أَبِي طَالِبٍ، قَالَ: لَمَّا نَزَلَتْ هذه الآية على رسول الله (ص) «وَأَنْذِرْ عَشِيرَتَكَ الأَقْرَبِينَ»، دعانى رسول الله (ص) فَقَالَ لِي: يَا عَلِيُّ، إِنَّ اللَّهَ أَمَرَنِي أَنْ أُنْذِرَ عَشِيرَتِي الأَقْرَبِينَ، فَضِقْتُ بِذَلِكَ ذَرْعًا، وَعَرَفْتُ أَنِّي مَتَى أُبَادِيهِمْ بِهَذَا الأَمْرِ أَرَى مِنْهُمْ مَا أَكْرَهُ، فَصَمَتُّ عليه حتى جاءنى جبرئيل فَقَالَ: «يَا مُحَمَّدُ، إِنَّكَ إِلا تَفْعَلْ مَا تُؤْمَرُ بِهِ يُعَذِّبْكَ رَبُّكَ»، فَاصْنَعْ لَنَا صَاعًا من طعام، واجعل عليه رحل شَاةٍ، وَامْلأْ لَنَا عُسًّا مِنْ لَبَنٍ، ثُمَّ اجْمَعْ لِي بَنِي عَبْدِ الْمُطَّلِبِ حَتَّى أُكَلِّمَهُمْ، وَأُبَلِّغَهُمْ مَا أُمِرْتُ بِهِ، فَفَعَلْتُ مَا أَمَرَنِي بِهِ ثُمَّ دَعَوْتُهُمْ لَهُ، وَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ أَرْبَعُونَ رَجُلا، يَزِيدُونَ رَجُلا أَوْ يَنْقُصُونَهُ، فِيهِمْ أَعْمَامُهُ: أَبُو طَالِبٍ وَحَمْزَةُ وَالْعَبَّاسُ وَأَبُو لَهَبٍ.... فَلَمَّا اجْتَمَعُوا إِلَيْهِ دَعَانِي بِالطَّعَامِ الَّذِي صَنَعْتُ لَهُمْ، فَجِئْتُ بِهِ، فَلَمَّا وَضَعْتُهُ تَنَاوَلَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (ص) حِذْيَةً مِنَ اللَّحْمِ، فَشَقَّهَا بِأَسْنَانِهِ، ثُمَّ أَلْقَاهَا فِي نَوَاحِي الصَّحْفَةِ ثُمَّ قَالَ: خُذُوا بِسْمِ اللَّهِ، فَأَكَلَ الْقَوْمُ حَتَّى مَا لَهُمْ بِشَيْءٍ حَاجَةٌ وَمَا أَرَى إِلا مَوْضِعَ أَيْدِيهِمْ، وَايْمُ اللَّهِ الَّذِي نَفْسُ عَلِي بِيَدِهِ، وَإِنْ كَانَ الرَّجُلُ الْوَاحِدُ مِنْهُمْ لَيَأْكُلُ مَا قَدَّمْتُ لِجَمِيعِهِمْ ثُمَّ قَالَ: اسْقِ الْقَوْمَ، فَجِئْتُهُمْ بِذَلِكَ الْعُسِّ، فَشَرِبُوا مِنْهُ حَتَّى رُوُوا مِنْهُ جَمِيعًا، وَايْمُ اللَّهِ إِنْ كَانَ الرَّجُلُ الْوَاحِدُ مِنْهُمْ لَيَشْرَبُ مثله، فلما اراد رسول الله (ص) أَنْ يُكَلِّمَهُمْ بَدَرَهُ أَبُو لَهَبٍ إِلَى الْكَلامِ، فقال: لهدما سَحَرَكُمْ صَاحِبُكُمْ! فَتَفَرَّقَ الْقَوْمُ وَلَمْ يُكَلِّمْهُمْ رَسُولُ الله (ص)، فَقَالَ: الْغَدَ يَا عَلِيُّ، إِنَّ هَذَا الرَّجُلَ سَبَقَنِي إِلَى مَا قَدْ سَمِعْتَ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ، فَتَفَرَّقَ الْقَوْمُ قَبْلَ أَنْ أُكَلِّمَهُمْ، فَعُدَّ لَنَا مِنَ الطَّعَامِ بِمِثْلِ مَا صَنَعْتَ، ثُمَّ اجْمَعْهُمْ إِلَيَّ. قَالَ: فَفَعَلْتُ، ثُمَّ جَمَعْتُهُمْ ثُمَّ دَعَانِي بِالطَّعَامِ فَقَرَّبْتُهُ لَهُمْ، فَفَعَلَ كَمَا فَعَلَ بِالأَمْسِ، فَأَكَلُوا حَتَّى مَا لَهُمْ بِشَيْءٍ حَاجَةٌ ثُمَّ قَالَ: اسْقِهِمْ، فَجِئْتُهُمْ بِذَلِكَ الْعُسِّ، فَشَرِبُوا حَتَّى رُوُوا مِنْهُ جَمِيعًا، ثُمَّ تَكَلَّمَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (ص)، فَقَالَ: يَا بَنِي عَبْدِ الْمُطَّلِبِ، إِنِّي وَاللَّهِ مَا أَعْلَمُ شَابًّا فِي الْعَرَبِ جَاءَ قَوْمَهُ بِأَفْضَلَ مِمَّا قَدْ

جِئْتُكُمْ بِهِ، إِنِّي قَدْ جِئْتُكُمْ بِخَيْرِ الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ، وَقَدْ أَمَرَنِي اللَّهُ تَعَالَى أَنْ أَدْعُوكُمْ إِلَيْهِ، فَأَيُّكُمْ يُؤَازِرُنِي عَلَى هَذَا الأَمْرِ عَلَى أَنْ يَكُونَ أَخِي وَوَصِيِّي وَخَلِيفَتِي فِيكُمْ؟ قَالَ: فَأَحْجَمَ الْقَوْمُ عَنْهَا جَمِيعًا، وَقُلْتُ: وَإِنِّي لأَحْدَثُهُمْ سِنًّا، وَأَرْمَصُهُمْ عَيْنًا، وَأَعْظَمُهُمْ بَطْنًا، وَأَحْمَشُهُمْ سَاقًا، أَنَا يَا نَبِيَّ اللَّهِ، أَكُونُ وَزِيرَكَ عَلَيْهِ فَأَخَذَ بِرَقَبَتِي، ثُمَّ قَالَ: ان هذا أخي ووصي وَخَلِيفَتِي فِيكُمْ، فَاسْمَعُوا لَهُ وَأَطِيعُوا] قَالَ: فَقَامَ الْقَوْمُ يَضْحَكُونَ، وَيَقُولُونَ لأَبِي طَالِبٍ: قَدْ أَمَرَكَ أَنْ تَسْمَعَ لابْنِكَ وَتُطِيعَ.

The same version of this hadith also is mentioned in several other Sunni sources, for example: Ṣiqalī Makkī, Muhammad b. Abī Muhammad, *Anbā' Nujabā' al-Abnā',* pp. 46-48; Ibn al-Athīr, Abū al-Ḥasan, *al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*, vol. 1, pp. 585-586; Abu al-Fidā', 'Imād al-Dīn, *al-Mukhtaṣar fī Akhbār al-Bashar,* vol. 1, pp. 116-117; Baghdādī, 'Alā' al-Dīn, *Lubāb al-Ta'wīl fī Ma'ānī al-Tanẓīl,* vol. 3, pp. 332-333; Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah li Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd,* vol. 13, pp. 210-211.

Another version of this hadith is mentioned in Nisā'ī, Ahmad b. Shu'ayb, *Khaṣā'iṣ*, pp. 83-84, no. 66:

عَن ربيعَة بن ناجد أَن رجلا قَالَ لعَلي يَا أَمِير الْمُؤمنِينَ لم ورثت ابْن عمك دون عمك قَالَ جمع رَسُول الله صلى الله عَلَيْهِ وَسلم أَو قَالَ دَعَا رَسُول الله صلى الله عَلَيْهِ وَسلم بنى عبد الْمطلب فَصنعَ لَهُم مدا من طَعَام قَالَ فَأَكَلُوا حَتَّى شَبِعُوا وبَقِي الطَّعَام كَمَا هُوَ كَأَنَّهُ لم يمس ثمَّ دَعَا بغمر فَشَرِبُوا حَتَّى رووا وبَقِي الشَّرَاب كَأَنَّهُ لم يمس أَو لم يشرب فَقَالَ يَا بنى عبد الْمطلب إِنِّي بعثت إِلَيْكُم بِخَاصَّة والى النَّاس بعامة وَقد رَأَيْتُمْ من هَذِه الآيَة مَا قد رَأَيْتُمْ فَأَيكُمْ يبايعنى على أَن يكون أخي وصاحبي ووارثي ووزيري فَلم يقم إِلَيْهِ أحد فَقُمْت إِلَيْهِ وكنت أصْغَر الْقَوْم سنا فَقَالَ اجْلِسْ ثمَّ قَالَ ثَلَاث مَرَّات كل ذَلِك أقوم إِلَيْهِ فَيَقُول اجْلِسْ حَتَّى

The Tradition of Rank (Hadith *al-Manzilah*)

The Prophet's strongest declaration of Imam Ali's successorship was revealed in the *Tradition of Rank*.

The Prophet went for the Battle of Tabūk, a military expedition he led against the Romans during the later years of his life. As the Muslim soldiers prepared themselves for war, the Prophet asked Ali to remain in Medina and take charge of the city during his absence. This saddened Ali since he was eager to have been given

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كَانَ فِي الثَّالِثَةِ ضرب بِيَدِهِ على يَدى ثمَّ قَالَ أَنْت أخي وصاحبي ووريثي ووزيري فبذلك ورثت ابْن عمي دون عمي.

A brief version of this hadith is mentioned in Ibn Ḥanbal, Abu Abdillah, *Musnad al-Imam Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal*, vol. 2, p. 465, no. 1371:

عَنْ عَلِيٍّ، رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ، قَالَ: جَمَعَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ- أَوْ دَعَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ- بَنِي عَبْدِ الْمُطَّلِبِ، فِيهِمْ رَهْطٌ كُلُّهُمْ يَأْكُلُ الْجَذَعَةَ، وَيَشْرَبُ الْفَرَقَ، قَالَ: فَصَنَعَ لَهُمْ مُدًّا مِنْ طَعَامٍ، فَأَكَلُوا حَتَّى شَبِعُوا، قَالَ: وَبَقِيَ الطَّعَامُ كَمَا هُوَ كَأَنَّهُ لَمْ يُمَسَّ، ثُمَّ دَعَا بِغُمَرٍ فَشَرِبُوا حَتَّى رَوَوْا، وَبَقِيَ الشَّرَابُ كَأَنَّهُ لَمْ يُمَسَّ- أَوْ لَمْ يُشْرَبْ- فَقَالَ: "يَا بَنِي عَبْدِ الْمُطَّلِبِ، إِنِّي بُعِثْتُ لَكُمْ خَاصَّةً وَإِلَى النَّاسِ بِعَامَّةً، وَقَدْ رَأَيْتُمْ مِنْ هَذِهِ الْآيَةِ مَا رَأَيْتُمْ، فَأَيُّكُمْ يُبَايِعُنِي عَلَى أَنْ يَكُونَ أَخِي وَصَاحِبِي؟" قَالَ: فَلَمْ يَقُمْ إِلَيْهِ أَحَدٌ، قَالَ: فَقُمْتُ إِلَيْهِ وَكُنْتُ أَصْغَرَ الْقَوْمِ، قَالَ: فَقَالَ: "اجْلِسْ" قَالَ: ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ كُلُّ ذَلِكَ أَقُومُ إِلَيْهِ فَيَقُولُ لِي: "اجْلِسْ" حَتَّى كَانَ فِي الثَّالِثَةِ ضَرَبَ بِيَدِهِ عَلَى يَدِي.

an opportunity to go for jihad.[2] He approached the Prophet and said, "O Prophet, you want me to be responsible for the women and children in the city?" The Prophet replied:

> Are you not pleased to be in relation to me like Aaron in relation to Musa, except that there is no prophet after me?[3]

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2. The "lesser jihad", or external striving for justice, in self-defense, or against oppression. We can do this in our hearts, through speech, or writing, and if these are ineffective, by physically trying to change an oppressive situation, either to resist or defend others against aggression. The term jihad literally means "striving." What is more crucial in Islam is the "greater jihad," or the internal struggle to avoid negative actions and develop good character.

3. Abū al-Ḥusayn 'Asākir al-Dīn, Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, vol. 4, p. 1870-1871 and Bukhārī, Muhammad b. Ismāeil, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, vol. 7, p. 81, no. 3841. The original text is as follows:

خَلَّفَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلَّمَ عَلِيَّ بْنَ أَبِي طَالِبٍ، فِي غَزْوَةِ تَبُوكَ. فَقَالَ :يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ! تُخَلِّفُنِي فِي النِّسَاءِ وَ الصِّبْيَانِ؟ فَقَالَ «أَمَا تَرْضَى أَنْ تَكُونَ مِنِّي بِمَنْزِلَةِ هَارُونَ مِنْ مُوسَى؟ غَيْرَ أَنَّهُ لاَنَبِيَّ بَعْدِي».

This hadith with slight deference also is mentioned in Ibn Ḥanbal, Abu Abdillah, *Musnad al-Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, vol. 3, p. 114, no. 1532 and vol. 5, p. 180, no. 3061:

وَخَرَجَ بِالنَّاسِ فِي غَزْوَةِ تَبُوكَ، قَالَ: فَقَالَ لَهُ عَلِيٌّ: أَخْرُجُ مَعَكَ؟ قَالَ: فَقَالَ لَهُ نَبِيُّ اللَّهِ: "لا" فَبَكَى عَلِيٌّ، فَقَالَ لَهُ: "أَمَا تَرْضَى أَنْ تَكُونَ مِنِّي بِمَنْزِلَةِ هَارُونَ مِنْ مُوسَى، إِلا أَنَّكَ لَسْتَ بِنَبِيٍّ، إِنَّهُ لاَيَنْبَغِي أَنْ أَذْهَبَ إِلا وَأَنْتَ خَلِيفَتِي، "قَالَ: وَقَالَ لَهُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: "أَنْتَ وَلِيِّي فِي كُلِّ مُؤْمِنٍ بَعْدِي."

The tradition of rank has been narrated during other events as well,[4] said to not a single person other than

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This hadith also is mentioned by Ḥimyarī, 'Abd al-Razzaq, *Al-Muṣannaf,* vol. 5, pp. 405-406, no. 9745 and vol. 11, p. 226, no. 20390:

أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لَمَّا خَرَجَ إِلَى تَبُوكَ اسْتَخْلَفَ عَلِيًّا إِلَى الْمَدِينَةِ عَلِيُّ بْنُ أَبِي طَالِبٍ فَقَالَ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ مَا كُنْتُ أُحِبُّ أَنْ تَخْرُجَ وَجْهًا إِلا وَأَنَا مَعَكَ، فَقَالَ: «أَمَا تَرْضَى أَنْ تَكُونَ مِنِّي بِمَنْزِلَةِ هَارُونَ مِنْ مُوسَى غَيْرَ أَنَّهُ لا نَبِيَّ بَعْدِي»

A brief version of the hadith also in mentioned in Abū al-Ḥusayn 'Asākir al-Dīn, Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, vol. 4, p. 1870, no. 2404; Bukhari, Muhammad b. Ismāeil, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, vol. 6, p. 117, no. 3309; Ibn Mājah, Muhammad b. Yazīd, *Sunan Ibn Mājah,* vol. 1, pp. 136-137, no. 121:

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلَّمَ لِعَلِيٍّ «أَنْتَ مِنِّي بِمَنْزِلَةِ هَارُونَ مِنْ مُوسَى. إِلا أَنَّهُ لاَنَبِيَّ بَعْدِي».

4. For example, in the time of conquest of Khaybar. Ibn al-Maghāzilī, Ali b. Muhammad, *Manāqib Amīr al-Mu'minīn Ali b. Abī Ṭālib,* Bab 99, p. 305-306, no. 285 and al-Khawārazmī, al-Muwaffiq, *al-Manāqib*, p. 129:

لما قدم على بن أبى طالب بفتح خيبر قال له النبى صلى الله عليه وسلم: ((يا على لولا أن تقول طائفة من أمتى فيک ما قالت النصارى فى عيسى بن مريم؛ لقلت فيک مقالاً لا تمر بملأ من المسلمين إلا أخذوا التراب من تحت رجليک، وفضل طهورک يستشفون بهما، ولكن حسبک أن تكون منى وأنا منک ترثنى، وأرثک وأنت منى بمنزلة هارون من موسى، غير أنه لا نبى بعدى، وأنت تبرئ ذمتى وتستر عورتى، وتقاتل على سنتى، وأنت غداً فى الآخرة أقرب الخلق منى

Imam Ali, and much to the envy of the companions. When Sa'd b. Abi Waqqāṣ was asked by Mu'awiyah why he refused to verbally abuse Ali, he answered by listing three sayings the Prophet said about Ali, one of them being *hadith ul-manzilah*;[5] this not only led to Sa'd's refusal

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وأنت على الحوض خليفتى، وإن شيعتک على منابر من نور مبيضةً وجوههم، حولى أشفع لهم ويكونون فى الجنة جيرانى، وإن حربک حربى، وسلمک سلمى، وسريرتک سريرتى، وعلانيتک علانيتى، وإن ولدک ولدى، وأنت تقضى دينى وأنت تنجز وعدى، وإن الحق على لسانک، وفى قلبک، ومعک، وبين يديک ونصب عينيک، الإيمان مخالط لحمک ودمک، كما خالط لحمى ودمى، لا يرد على الحوض مبغض لک، ولا يغيب عنه محب لک)).

Another incident that the Prophet mentioned this hadith was the time when he allowed Ali to do in his mosque what he himself was permitted to do and closed the doors in the mosque except Ali's door. al-Khawārazmī, al-Muwaffiq, *al-Manāqib*, p. 109 and Ibn 'Asākir, Abu al-Qāsim Ali b. al-Ḥasan, *Tārikh-u Madīnat-i Dimashq*, vol. 42, p. 139:

فقال رسول الله (صلى الله عليه وسلم) تعال يا على إنه يحل لک فى المسجد ما يحل لى يا على ألا ترضى أن تكون منى بمنزلة هارون من موسى إلا النبوة

5. Tirmidhī, Muhammad b. 'Isa, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, vol. 5, pp. 455-456, no. 3724; Nayshabūrī, Abu Abdillah al-Hākim, *al-Mustadrak 'ala al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, vol. 3, p. 117, no. 4575; Nisā'ī, Ahmad b. Shu'ayb, *Khaṣā'iṣ*, pp. 30-37, no. 11; The original text is as follows:

أَمَّرَ مُعَاوِيَةُ بْنُ أَبِى سُفْيَانَ سَعْدًا، فَقَالَ: مَا يَمْنَعُکَ أَنْ تَسُبَّ أَبَا تُرَابٍ؟ قَالَ: أَمَّا مَا ذَكَرْتَ ثَلَاثًا قَالَهُنَّ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلَّمَ فَلَنْ

to badmouth him, but he held within him a fervent desire to possess just one of those ranks.

This hadith reveals the status Imam Ali holds in relation to Prophet Muhammad, as Aaron held in relation to Moses. Although Aaron died before Moses, he was his brother's successor when Moses left for 40 days to receive the tablets. During his lifetime, he was the closest person to Moses and the only one eligible enough to be his successor. In relation to Moses, Aaron was

- a vicegerent

وَ وَاعَدْنَا مُوسىَ ثَلاثِينَ لَيْلَةً وَ أَتْمَمْنَاهَا بِعَشْرٍ فَتَمَّ مِيقَاتُ رَبِّهِ أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً وَ قَالَ مُوسىَ لأَخِيهِ هَرُونَ اخْلُفْنِي فِي قَوْمِي وَ أَصْلِحْ وَ لاتَتَّبِعْ سَبِيلَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ

And We made an appointment with Moses for thirty nights, and completed them with ten [more]; thus the tryst of his Lord was completed in forty nights. And Moses said to Aaron, his brother, "Be my successor among my people, and set things right and do not follow the way of the agents of corruption." (7:142)

أَسَبَّهُ، لأَنْ تَكُونَ لِي وَاحِدَةٌ مِنْهُنَّ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِنْ حُمْرِ النَّعَمِ، سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلَّمَ يَقُولُ لِعَلِيٍّ وَ خَلَّفَهُ فِي بَعْضِ مَغَازِيهِ، فَقَالَ لَهُ عَلِيٌّ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، تَخْلُفُنِي مَعَ النِّسَاءِ وَ الصِّبْيَانِ، فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلَّمَ: «أَ مَا تَرْضَى أَنْ تَكُونَ مِنِّي بِمَنْزِلَةِ هَارُونَ مِنْ مُوسَى إِلا أَنَّهُ لانُبُوَّةَ بَعْدِي»

- a minister

وَ اجْعَل لِيّ وَزِيراً مِنْ أَهْلِي هَارُونَ أَخِي

And give me a Minister from my family,
Aaron, my brother (20:29–30)

- an aid

اشْدُدْ بِهِ أَزْرِي

Add to my strength through him (20:31)

- a partner

وَ أَشْرِكْهُ فِي أَمْرِي

And make him share my task (20:32)

Imam Ali was the Prophet's vicegerent, minister, aid, and partner in which he was to convey the message revealed to the Prophet. As clearly stated by the Prophet, this was to be conveyed *after* his death; otherwise, the Prophet did not need to add that there is no prophet after him.

And to reiterate, when Prophet Muhammad sent for Imam Ali to convey *surah al-Tawbah* to the polytheists and unbelievers, and he said, "I was told by God that someone from myself must declare this," this meant that

Imam Ali was "from" (*minhu*) the Prophet just as Prophet Aaron was "from"[6] Prophet Moses.

The Tradition of the Bird *(Hadith al-Ṭayr)*

This hadith is about Prophet Muhammad and his prayer to God to share a ready-to-eat meal that was gifted to him—a roasted bird—with the most beloved person to Him. Different versions of this hadith have been combined for an accurate understanding of the event.

A brief version:

> The Prophet was gifted with a ready-to-eat roasted bird. Before eating, the Prophet raised his palms and implored, "O God! Send the person who is dearest to you and to me so that he may share this roasted bird with me." Imam Ali then came in and shared the meal with the Prophet.[7]

Another version with ambiguous information:

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6. 20:29

7. Ṭabarānī, Abu al-Qāsīm Sulaymān b. Aḥmad, *al-Mu'jam al-Kabīr*, vol. 7, p. 95-96, no. 6437. The original text is as follows:

> عَنْ سَفِينَةَ، مَوْلَى النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ، أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أُتِيَ بِطَيْرٍ، فَقَالَ: «اللهُمَّ ائْتِنِي بِأَحَبِّ خَلْقِكَ إِلَيْكَ يَأْكُلُ مَعِيَ مِنْ هَذَا الطَّيْرِ» ، فَجَاءَ عَلِيٌّ رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ، فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: «اللهُمَّ وَالِ»

> One of the Anṣar women gifted a fried bird to the Prophet. When he received it, he prayed, "My Lord, bring the one who is the most beloved person by You and me"—'He raised his voice.' The Prophet asked, "Who is this?" Anas replied, "Ali."[8]

The hadith ends at this point. It is unclear as to who raised his voice, and up until this point, there is no mention of Imam Ali. We may think it was the Prophet who did so, but because he asked, "Who is this man?" it could not have been the Prophet. Anas then said, "It's Ali."

Another version reads that as soon as the Prophet received the meal and raised his hands in prayer, Ali knocked on his door. Anas said, "I informed Ali that the Prophet was busy and will not accept visitors at the moment." The Prophet continued to pray, and when Imam Ali went twice to knock, Anas prevented him. When Imam Ali came once more, this time knocking

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8. Ibn Ḥanbal, Abu Abdillah, *Faḍā'il al-Ṣaḥabah*, vol. 2, p. 560, no. 945. The original text is as follows:

> عَنْ سَفِينَةَ قَالَ: أَهْدَتِ امْرَأَةٌ مِنَ الأَنْصَارِ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ طَيْرَيْنِ بَيْنَ رَغِيفَيْنِ، فَقَدَّمَتْ إِلَيْهِ الطَّيْرَيْنِ، فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: «اللَّهُمَّ ائْتِنِي بِأَحَبِّ خَلْقِكَ إِلَيْكَ وَإِلَيَّ رَسُولِكَ»، وَرَفَعَ صَوْتَهُ، فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: «مَنْ هَذَا؟» فَقَالَ: عَلِيٌّ، فَقَالَ: «فَافْتَحْ لَهُ» . فَفَتَحْتُ، فَأَكَلَ مَعَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مِنَ الطَّيْرَيْنِ حَتَّى فَنِيَا.

harder, the Prophet heard it, and asked Anas as to who it was. When Anas informed him, the Prophet invited Ali to enter, and told him, "I asked God three times to send me someone who is most beloved by Him and most beloved by me to eat with me." Imam Ali said that he, too, came three times, although Anas asked him to return. When the Prophet asked Anas as to why he refused Ali, Anas replied, "I wanted someone from my own people to respond to your prayer."[9]

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9. Haythamī, Ali b. Abu Bakr, *Majma' al-Zawā'id wa Manba' al-Fawā'id,* vol. 9, p. 125, no. 14723. The original text is as follows:

وَعَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ قَالَ: «كُنْتُ أَخْدِمُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - فَقَدَّمَ فَرْخًا مَشْوِيًّا، فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ -: "اللَّهُمَّ ائْتِنِي بِأَحَبِّ الْخَلْقِ إِلَيْكَ وَإِلَيَّ، يَأْكُلُ مَعِي مِنْ هَذَا الْفَرْخِ." فَجَاءَ عَلِيٌّ وَدَقَّ الْبَابَ، فَقَالَ أَنَسٌ: مَنْ هَذَا؟ قَالَ: عَلِيٌّ، فَقُلْتُ: النَّبِيُّ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - عَلَى حَاجَةٍ فَانْصَرَفَ، ثُمَّ تَنَحَّى رَسُولُ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - وَأَكَلَ، ثُمَّ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ -: "اللَّهُمَّ ائْتِنِي بِأَحَبِّ الْخَلْقِ إِلَيْكَ وَإِلَيَّ، يَأْكُلُ مَعِي مِنْ هَذَا الْفَرْخِ." فَجَاءَ عَلِيٌّ، فَدَقَّ الْبَابَ دَقًّا شَدِيدًا، فَسَمِعَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - فَقَالَ: "يَا أَنَسُ مَنْ هَذَا؟." قُلْتُ: عَلِيٌّ. قَالَ: "أَدْخِلْهُ." فَدَخَلَ، فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ -: "لَقَدْ سَأَلْتُ اللَّهَ ثَلاثًا أَنْ يَأْتِيَنِي بِأَحَبِّ الْخَلْقِ إِلَيْهِ وَإِلَيَّ يَأْكُلُ مَعِي مِنْ هَذَا الْفَرْخِ." فَقَالَ عَلِيٌّ: وَأَنَا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، لَقَدْ جِئْتُ ثَلاثًا كُلُّ ذَلِكَ يَرُدُّنِي أَنَسٌ، فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ -: "يَا أَنَسُ، مَا حَمَلَكَ عَلَى مَا صَنَعْتَ؟." قَالَ:

There are also versions in which either the companions of the Prophet competed with one another as to whom will be chosen to share the meal, or those present desired the person to be chosen from his or her relative or group.

Abu Ya'lā has two versions of this hadith. The first one reads:

> After the Prophet prayed, Aisha invoked God to choose her father as the first to knock on the door and share the meal with the Prophet. Ḥafṣa, the daughter of the second caliph, also besought God to nominate her father. And Anas desired it to be Sa'd ibn 'Ubādah. Anas then says, "After we prayed, we heard someone knocking at the door, and it was Ali. I told him the Prophet is busy, and so Ali left. When I heard another knock, I realized it was Ali again, and he was giving his salaam. This time, the Prophet heard Ali's voice and said to me, 'Check to see who is knocking at the door.' When I said it was Ali, the Prophet asked to let him enter."'[10]

أَحْبَبْتُ أَنْ تُدْرِكَ الدَّعْوَةُ رَجُلا مِنْ قَوْمِي، فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ -: "لا يُلامُ الرَّجُلُ عَلَى حُبِّ قَوْمِهِ»."

10. Cited from 'Asqalānī, Abu al-Faḍl Aḥmad b. Ali, *al-Maṭālib al-'Alīyah bi Zawā'id al-Masānīd al-Thamānīyah,* vol. 16, p. 108, no. 3935 and Ibn Kathīr al-Damishqī, Abu al-Fidā', Ismāeil b. 'Umar, *al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah,* vol. 7, Discussion on The Year Forty After Hijrah, p. 351. The original text is as follows:

The second one reports that when Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Uthman walked in, one after the other, the Prophet sent all of them back. When Ali came afterwards, the Prophet let him in.[11]

When considering the abovementioned hadiths, it leaves no doubt that Ali was the most beloved by God

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وَقَالَ أَبُو يَعْلَى: ...عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ قَالَ: «أُهْدِيَ لِرَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ حَجَلٌ مَشْوِيٌّ بِخُبْزِهِ وَصِنَابِهِ، فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: "اللَّهُمَّ ائْتِنِي بِأَحَبِّ خَلْقِكَ إِلَيْكَ يَأْكُلُ مَعِي مِنْ هَذَا الطَّعَامِ." فَقَالَتْ عَائِشَةُ: اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْهُ أَبِي. وَقَالَتْ حَفْصَةُ: اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْهُ أَبِي. وَقَالَ أَنَسٌ: وَقُلْتُ: اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْهُ سَعْدَ بْنَ عُبَادَةَ قَالَ: أَنَسٌ: فَسَمِعْتُ حَرَكَةً بِالْبَابِ، فَخَرَجْتُ، فَإِذَا عَلِيٌّ، فَقُلْتُ: إِنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَلَى حَاجَةٍ. فَانْصَرَفَ، ثُمَّ سَمِعْتُ حَرَكَةً بِالْبَابِ، فَخَرَجْتُ فَإِذَا عَلِيٌّ بِالْبَابِ. فَقُلْتُ: إِنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَلَى حَاجَةٍ. فَانْصَرَفَ، ثُمَّ سَمِعْتُ حَرَكَةً بِالْبَابِ، فَسَلَّمَ عَلِيٌّ، فَسَمِعَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ صَوْتَهُ، فَقَالَ: "انْظُرْ مَنْ هَذَا؟" فَخَرَجْتُ فَإِذَا هُوَ عَلِيٌّ، فَجِئْتُ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَأَخْبَرْتُهُ، فَقَالَ: "ائْذَنْ لَهُ." فَدَخَلَ عَلِيٌّ. فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ. "اللَّهُمَّ وَإِلَيَّ، اللَّهُمَّ وَإِلَيَّ."[اللهم وال من والاه]»

11. Abū Ya'lā al-Mūṣilī, Aḥmad b. Ali, *Musnad Abī Ya'lā al-Mūṣilī,* vol. 7, p. 105, no. 4052. The original text is as follows:

عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ، أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ كَانَ عِنْدَهُ طَائِرٌ فَقَالَ: «اللَّهُمَّ ائْتِنِي بِأَحَبِّ خَلْقِكَ يَأْكُلُ مَعِي مِنْ هَذَا الطَّيْرِ»، فَجَاءَ أَبُو بَكْرٍ فَرَدَّهُ، ثُمَّ جَاءَ عُمَرُ فَرَدَّهُ، ثُمَّ جَاءَ عَلِيٌّ فَأَذِنَ لَهُ.

This version of the hadith also is mentioned by Nisā'ī, Aḥmad b. Shu'ayb in his *Khaṣā'iṣ*, p. 29, no. 10.

and the Prophet. Regardless of which version, the one the Prophet adored most to share his meal with was none other than Ali.

Anas was not pleased to know that Ali was chosen to enter and eat with the Prophet, and attempted to prevent him from being given this privilege. It is worth mentioning that Anas not only displayed his grudge against Imam Ali in *Hadith al-Tayr*, but in other historical events as well. Although Anas was a close servant to the Prophet, when Imam Ali asked him to bear witness about the *Hadith of Ghadīr*, Anas refused to act as a witness to which he earned Imam Ali's curse. As a result, he later suffered from skin disease.[12]

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12. Ibn Abī al- Ḥadīd, 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, *Sharh Nahj al-Balāghah li Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd,* vol. 4, p. 74. The original text is as follows:

فصل فی ذکر المنحرفین عن علی: و ذکر جماعة من شیوخنا البغدادیین أن عدة من الصحابة و التابعین و المحدثین کانوا منحرفین عن علی (ع) قائلین فیه السوء و منهم من کتم مناقبه و أعان أعداءه میلا مع الدنیا و إیثارا للعاجلة فمنهم أنس بن مالک

ناشد علی (ع) الناس فی رحبة القصر أو قال رحبة الجامع بالکوفة أیکم سمع رسول الله ص یقول من کنت مولاه فعلی مولاه فقام اثنا عشر رجلا فشهدوا بها و أنس بن مالک فی القوم لم یقم فقال له: یا أنس ما یمنعک أن تقوم فتشهد و لقد حضرتها فقال: یا أمیر المؤمنین کبرت و نسیت فقال: اللهم إن کان کاذبا فارمه بها بیضاء لاتواریها العمامة قال طلحة بن عمیر فو الله لقد رأیت الوضح به بعد ذلک أبیض بین عینیه.

The Tradition of Ghadīr

According to a survey by 'Allāmah Amīnī, 110 companions of the Prophet have narrated the Tradition of Ghadīr,[13] when the Prophet clearly designated Ali as the leader of the Muslim Ummah; he held up the hand of Ali and said:

> O People! Do not you know that I have primacy and greater authority over believers than they over themselves?

When the crowd unanimously answered in the affirmative, he said:

> For whoever I am his Leader (*mawlā*), Ali is his Leader (*mawlā*).[14]

And among those who followed the companions of the Prophet, 89 second-generation companions, the *Tabi'īn,*[15] had the opportunity to hear this news and

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13. Amīnī Najafī, 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Aḥmad, *al-Ghadīr fi al-Kitāb wa al-Sunnah wa al-Adab,* vol. 1, pp. 14-61

14. Ibn Ḥanbal, Abu Abdillah, *Musnad al-Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal,* vol. 32, p. 55-56, no. 19302. The original text is as follows:

قَالَ أَبُو نُعَيْم: فَقَامَ نَاسٌ كَثِيرٌ فَشَهِدُوا حِينَ أَخَذَهُ بِيَدِهِ، فَقَالَ لِلنَّاسِ:
"أَتَعْلَمُونَ أَنِّي أَوْلَى بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ؟" قَالُوا: نَعَمْ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ،
قَالَ: "مَنْ كُنْتُ مَوْلاهُ فَهَذَا مَوْلاهُ، اللَّهُمَّ وَالِ مَنْ وَالاهُ، وَعَادِ مَنْ عَادَاهُ

15. Those who have met the companions of the Prophet, and not the Prophet himself.

transfer it to the next generation.[16] For more on the Event of Ghadīr, please see to the *Verse of Propagation* under the subtitle "Evidence from the Qur'an" in this chapter.

Many historians and Sunni narrators of hadith have reported on the Hadith of Ghadīr, and though its interpretation is disputed, its authenticity is irrefutable. Sunni scholars have argued that *mawlā* here does not mean "master" or "leader"; rather, it merely refers to "friend" or "helper." However, as mentioned before, even if we were to assume that he meant "friend," the fact that the Prophet assembled thousands of Muslims at midday in the heat of the desert sun only to proclaim that Ali is his "friend," should be enough to tell us that we must follow the latter.

The great Shi'a scholar Abdul Ḥusayn Amīnī, author of a masterpiece on imamate called *al-Ghadīr*, demonstrated how the Hadith of Ghadīr and relevant hadith are narrated by Sunni narrators throughout the generations, and how this was also echoed through poetry. In his research of over tens of thousands of books and during his travels around the world to find these manuscripts, 'Allāmah Amīnī proved the hadith of Ghadīr was authentic.

16. Amīnī Najafī, 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Aḥmad, *al-Ghadīr fi al-Kitāb wa al-Sunnah wa al-Adab,* vol. 1, pp. 62-73

In *al-Ghadīr,* he narrates from many Sunni scholars, including Jalal al-Dīn Abd al-Raḥman al-Suyūṭī, a Shāfi'ī scholar and prolific author from Egypt. He quotes from one of Suyūṭī's books, *al-Durr al-Manthūr.*[17] Suyūṭī and others narrate from Ibn Mas'ūd:[18]

> We were reciting the following verse in the time of the Prophet Muhammad, "*O Apostle! Proclaim the (message) which has been sent to you from your Lord...*" [Ali is the leader, master of the believers.] "*If you do not, you would not have proclaimed and fulfilled His mission. And Allah will protect you from the people.*"[19]

The Tradition of Wilāyah

The Prophet's Tradition of Wilāyah is reported by many Sunnis in various hadith books with different phrases:

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17. An exegesis of the Qur'an based on hadith.

18. One of the companions of the Prophet who was imprisoned because he narrated hadiths during the time of the second caliph.

19. Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-Dīn, *al-Durr al-Manthūr fī Tafsīr al-Ma'thūr,* vol. 2, p. 298. The original text is as follows:

> و أخرج ابن مردويه عن ابن مسعود قال: كنا نقرأ على عهد رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم يا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ ما أُنزِلَ إِلَيْکَ مِنْ رَبِّکَ ان علياً مولى المؤمنين وَ إِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فَما بَلَّغْتَ رِسالَتَهُ وَ اللَّهُ يَعْصِمُکَ مِنَ النَّاسِ

> Ali is the master, leader of all the believers after me [20]

> You are the master, the leader, of all the believers after me, both male and female.[21]

> He is the master, leader of all the believers after me.[22]

This is significant because the notion of leadership (*wilāyah*)—"You are the master"—is declared.

Some sources have mentioned the context of the hadith. On one occasion, the Prophet had sent a group of Muslims on a conquest under Ali's command. They won the battle, and when Ali distributed the war booty four men were not pleased with the way the booty was distributed and questioned its fairness. They decided to report the matter to the Prophet once they returned to Medina. Upon their arrival, the Prophet ignored the first three men. When the fourth person spoke of Ali's action,

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20. Hindī, 'Ala al-Dīn Ali al-Muttaqī, *Kanz al-Ummāl fī Sunan al-Aqwāl wa al-Af'āl,* vol. 13, p. 142, no. 364444. The original text is as follows:

علی ولی کل مؤمن بعدی

21. Ibn Ḥanbal, Abu Abdillah, *Faḍā'il al- Ṣaḥabah,* vol. 2, p. 682, no. 1168. The original text is as follows:

أَنْتَ وَلِيُّ كُلِّ مُؤْمِنٍ بَعْدِي وَمُؤْمِنَةٍ

22. Nisāʾī, Aḥmad b. Shu'ayb, *Khaṣā'iṣ*, part 29, p. 109, no. 89. The original text is as follows:

هُوَ ولی کل مُؤمن من بعدِی

the Prophet's face showed anger, and he repeated three times, "What do you want from Ali?" or in some versions "Leave Ali" and then said:

إِنَّ عَلِيًّا مِنِّی وَ أَنَا مِنْهُ، وَ هُوَ وَلِیُّ كُلِّ مُؤْمِنٍ بَعْدِی

> Indeed, Ali is from me, and I am from Ali. And after me, Ali is the master of all believers.[23]

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23. This hadith has been mentioned in many major Sunni collections of hadith. For example, one may refer to the following: al-Tirmidhī, Muhammad b. 'Isā, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, vol. 5, Bab Manāgib Ali b. Abi Ṭālib, p. 450, no. 3712; Ibn Ḥanbal, Abu Abdillah, *Musnad al-Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, vol. 33, p. 154, no. 19928; al-Ṭabarānī, Abu al-Qāsīm Sulaymān b. Aḥmad, *al-Mu'jam al-Kabīr*, vol. 18, p. 128, no. 265. The original text is as follows:

بَعَثَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلَّمَ جَيْشًا وَ اسْتَعْمَلَ عَلَيْهِمْ عَلِيَّ بْنَ أَبِي طَالِبٍ، فَمَضَى فِي السَّرِيَّةِ، فَأَصَابَ جَارِيَةً، فَأَنْكَرُوا عَلَيْهِ، وَ تَعَاقَدَ أَرْبَعَةٌ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلَّمَ فَقَالُوا: إِذَا لَقِينَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلَّمَ أَخْبَرْنَاهُ بِمَا صَنَعَ عَلِيٌّ، وَ كَانَ الْمُسْلِمُونَ إِذَا رَجَعُوا مِنَ السَّفَرِ بَدَءُوا بِرَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلَّمَ فَسَلَّمُوا عَلَيْهِ، ثُمَّ انْصَرَفُوا إِلَى رِحَالِهِمْ، فَلَمَّا قَدِمَتِ السَّرِيَّةُ سَلَّمُوا عَلَى النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلَّمَ، فَقَامَ أَحَدُ الأَرْبَعَةِ، فَقَالَ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى عَلِيِّ بْنِ أَبِي طَالِبٍ صَنَعَ كَذَا وَ كَذَا، فَأَعْرَضَ عَنْهُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلَّمَ، ثُمَّ قَامَ الثَّانِي، فَقَالَ مِثْلَ مَقَالَتِهِ فَأَعْرَضَ عَنْهُ، ثُمَّ قَامَ الثَّالِثُ، فَقَالَ مِثْلَ مَقَالَتِهِ، فَأَعْرَضَ عَنْهُ، ثُمَّ قَامَ الرَّابِعُ، فَقَالَ مِثْلَ مَا قَالُوا، فَأَقْبَلَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلَّمَ وَ الْغَضَبُ يُعْرَفُ فِي

Thus, the Prophet's description of Ali being from him and he from Ali, and Imam Ali as the master of all believers was triggered during an event, and it clearly shows that Ali was the one to be chosen by the Prophet according to the will of God.

وَجْهِهِ، فَقَالَ: «مَا تُرِيدُونَ مِنْ عَلِيٍّ؟ مَا تُرِيدُونَ مِنْ عَلِيٍّ؟ مَا تُرِيدُونَ مِنْ عَلِيٍّ؟ إِنَّ عَلِيًّا مِنِّي وَ أَنَا مِنْهُ، وَ هُوَ وَلِيُّ كُلِّ مُؤْمِنٍ بَعْدِي».

Chapter 11

Wilāyah

The term wilāyah is profound in Arabic. It originally refers to something coming after something else without any interval. Beyond its material meaning, wilāyah essentially means "to assist," "to help," "to lead," or "to act as someone's master."[1]

Wilāyah has two meanings: (a) to help, assist, and aid; and (b) to lead, rule, and have control of something.

The first meaning

1. In Arabic and in other languages, it is very common that the original meaning of a term might refer to a physical or material meaning, and then it is extended to immaterial or abstract meanings as well.

Rāghib Iṣfahānī, Ḥusayn b. Muhammad, *al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'an*, in the entry on *wali*, p. 885.

In his *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*,[2] Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī[3] says that wilāyah can sometimes mean "aid" or "friend," such as in the following verse:

وَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَ الْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْض

> *But the faithful, men and women, are comrades of one another.* (9:71)[4]

God says that the faithful—male or female—are a *walī* of one another. Here, *walī* refers to a believer helping another; the relationship is reciprocal. They are "comrades of one another" on a mutual basis.

Second meaning

Al-Rāzī also mentions that *walī* can also refer one who is superior or one who takes charge. Al-Rāzī mentions a hadith similar to those found in Shi'a sources. For example, from a jurisprudential point of view, the permission of a *walī* is required for a girl to get married. Here, *walī* refers to her father, and if her father is unavailable, it can refer to her guardian.[5]

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2. Or *Mafātīh al-Ghayb,* a commentary on the Qur'an
3. Prominent Sunni scholar and prolific author
4. Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn, *Mafātīh al-Ghayb*, vol. 12, p. 383
5. Ibid. The original text is as follow:

أن الولى فى اللغة قد جاء بمعنى الناصر و المحب، كما فى قوله «وَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَ الْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ» [التوبة: 71] و جاء بمعنى

Moreover, the Prophet was a *walī* of this Islamic nation. The Qur'an says:

إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللَّهُ وَ رَسُولُهُ وَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَوةَ وَ يُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَوةَ وَ هُمْ رَاكِعُونَ

Your guardian is only God, His Apostle, and the faithful who maintain the prayer and give the zakat while bowing down (5:55).

In his *Wilā'hā wa Wilāyathā,* Ayatullāh Muṭahharī states that the verse "*But the faithful, men and women, are comrades of one another*" (9:71) does not merely refer to being friends of one other. In this usage, some aspects of the second meaning are found. The relation of wilāyah between believers is not merely to assist each other; rather, it is to *supervise* one another. This means that one believer is responsible for observing the rights of other believers, as God gave specific believers an authority over others. It is for this reason we are obliged to enjoin others to good and forbid one another from doing wrong.[6] Without this right upon each other, we could then choose to be oblivious and mind our own business, or at least pleasantly ask others to see to their obligations

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المتصرف .قال عليه الصلاة و السلام: «أيما امرأة نكحت بغير إذن وليها»

6. Muṭahharī, Murṭaḍā, *Majmūe Athār, Wilā'hā wa Wilāyathā,* vol. 3, p. 277.

as an alternative. But we are asked to enjoin others to do good; when it is necessary, believers command one another to observe their religious duties regardless of whether it is towards a close relative or not.

Thus, wilāyah is not merely a matter of friendship; there is a superiority each believer has towards another believer. God gives superiority to those who exceed others in practicing Islam.

Scholars divide the second meaning of wilāyah into two:

a. Generative guardianship: *Al-wilāyah al-takwīnīyyah,* or *wilāyah* in creation.
b. Legislative guardianship: *Al-wilāyah al-tashrīʿīyyah,* or *wilāyah* in legislation.

God possesses both types of guardianship. In an Islamic state, lawmakers are permitted to generate laws, although only within a framework of divine law, that is, knowing none other than God to be the true lawmaker. The only framework in which legislation can be applied in parliament is divine law and a legitimate constitution, which by itself must be compatible with divine law. Full legislation belongs to God, and then He provides this in some measure to those He is pleased with, such as the prophets. While some verses in the Qur'an point to either type of wilāyah, others refer to both.

Wilāyah in both creation and legislation

There are verses that refer to both types of wilāyah. For example, in verse 42:9, God says:

أَمِ اتخَّذُوا مِن دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ فَاللَّهُ هُوَ الْوَلِى وَ هُوَ يحُْيِ الْمَوْتى
وَ هُوَ عَلى كلِّ شَىءٍ قَدِيرٍ

Have they taken guardians besides Him? [Say,] "It is God who is the Guardian, and He revives the dead, and He has power over all things." (42:9)

This verse refers to both types of guardianship, referring to God as the only true and independent master and guardian (*walī*). Any other guardianship or mastership must originate from His guardianship and mastership, just as mirrors reflect only the light of a bulb and cannot truly give off light themselves. The prophets, imams, mujtahids,[7] and in some cases, parents, have all been delegated some level of the wilāyah that belongs to God in the first place. It is for this reason that if someone who has wilāyah without being an infallible asks us to commit an action against the command of God, we must disobey them. For example, parents are to be obeyed, but if they ask one to commit a sin, they must not be obeyed.

7. In Islamic law: a scholar's independent interpretation or use of reason to derive a rule of divine law from the Qur'an if not precisely described in the Qur'an, hadiths, and scholarly consensus is called ijtihād and the scholar is called mujtahid.

Wilāyah in legislation

Verse 36 of the Chapter *Aḥzab* refers to legislative authority:

وَ مَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَ لامُؤْمِنَةٍ إِذَا قَضى اللَّهُ وَ رَسُولُهُ أَمْراً أَن يَكُونَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِمْ وَ مَن يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَ رَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلالاً مُّبِيناً

A faithful man or woman may not, when God and His Apostle have decided on a matter, have any option in their matter, and whoever disobeys God and His Apostle has certainly strayed into manifest error.

The decree of both God and the Prophet is the truth: believers do not reserve the right to evaluate as to whether they should accept it or not, as people should not have a choice when the truth is concerned. Evaluating God's decrees is like having the choice of saying the sun is shining when it is actually shining. Moreover, this is not to be mistaken as a matter of dictatorship; divine or prophetic decisions are not to be questioned, because they always comply with the truth.

Wilāyah in creation

In verse 101 of the Chapter *Yusuf*, Prophet Yusuf addresses God:

أَنتَ وَلِيِّ فِى ٱلدُّنْيَا وَٱلاخِرَةِ تَوَفَّنِى مُسْلِماً وَٱلْحِقْنِى بِالصَّالِحِينَ

> *You are my guardian in this world and the Hereafter! Let my death be in submission [to You], and unite me with the Righteous.*

This verse refers to wilāyah in creation. It does not refer to legislative wilāyah, because there exists no legislation of Islamic law (*sharīah*) in the hereafter. Prophet Yusuf tells God that He is the guardian of this world and the hereafter, and this means that all affairs—his life, existence, happiness, abundance, illness—are in God's hands in both this world and the next.

Although God maintains full authority over all affairs, the Qur'an tells us about the role that people such as the prophets, imams, saints, and even jinn[8] play in maintaining this world and running its affairs. Hence, God oversees everything, although there is a hierarchy, like a king or leader who runs the government with a hierarchical structure of agents, instead of single-handedly doing so.

Prophet Solomon

In verses 38 and 39 of the Chapter *The Ant*, Prophet Sulayman asked his men to bring Queen Shiba's throne:

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8. *Jinns* are two-dimensional supernatural spirits who like human beings, have free will and can be good or evil. They occupy the unseen world and possess particular physical abilities human beings do not have. However, human beings exceed them in their intellectual and spiritual capacities, which is why jinns are commanded to follow a human prophet.

قَالَ يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلْمَلَؤُا۟ أَيُّكُمْ يَأْتِينِى بِعَرْشِهَا قَبْلَ أَن يَأْتُونِى مُسْلِمِينَ
قَالَ عِفْرِيتٌ مِّنَ ٱلْجِنِّ أَنَا ءَاتِيكَ بِهِۦ قَبْلَ أَن تَقُومَ مِن مَّقَامِكَ
وَ إِنِّى عَلَيْهِ لَقَوِىٌّ أَمِينٌ قَالَ ٱلَّذِى عِندَهُۥ عِلْمٌ مِّنَ ٱلْكِتَٰبِ أَنَا
ءَاتِيكَ بِهِۦ قَبْلَ أَن يَرْتَدَّ إِلَيْكَ طَرْفُكَ فَلَمَّا رَءَاهُ مُسْتَقِرًّا عِندَهُۥ
قَالَ هَٰذَا مِن فَضْلِ رَبِّى لِيَبْلُوَنِىٓ ءَأَشْكُرُ أَمْ أَكْفُرُ وَ مَن شَكَرَ
فَإِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهِۦ وَ مَن كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ رَبِّى غَنِىٌّ كَرِيمٌ

He said, "O [members of the] elite! Which of you will bring me her throne before they come to me in submission?" An afreet from among the jinn said, "I will bring it to you before you rise from your place. Indeed I have the power for it and am trustworthy." The one who had some knowledge of the Book said, "I will bring it to you in the twinkling of an eye." So when he saw it set near him, he said, "This is by the grace of my Lord, to test me if I will give thanks or be ungrateful. And whoever gives thanks, gives thanks only for his own sake. And whoever is ungrateful [should know that] my Lord is indeed all-sufficient, all-generous." (27:38–40)

Though the jinn wanted to bring the throne of the Queen before the Prophet stood up, another person said he could bring the throne in less than a blink. And this person had one quality: some knowledge of the Book. This proves that it is possible for certain people to have extraordinary power more so than ordinary abilities. This is not unusual, as there are pious people who have been informed of occurrences in another part of the world, or of events in the past and future.

The question arises: How is it possible for the second person to bring the throne instantaneously? It is because he had some knowledge of the Book (*'ilmun min al-kitāb*) that he was able to bring the throne within a twinkling of an eye. Now we can better imagine what would a person who has all the knowledge of the Book (*'ilm al-kitāb*) is capable of. The Qur'an tells us:

وَ يَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ لَسْتَ مُرْسَلاً قُلْ كَفَى بِاللَّهِ شَهِيداً بَيْنِى وَ بَيْنَكُمْ وَ مَنْ عِندَهُ عِلْمُ الْكِتَابِ

The Unbelievers say: "No messenger art thou" Say: "Enough for a witness between me and you is God, and such as have the knowledge of the Book." (13:43)

Prophet Jesus

Numerous verses in the Qur'an refer to the miracles of Prophet Jesus, although it is clearly stated that they could not have occurred without His permission and authority. The role of the prophets in performing miracles was not just to pray and then God performed the miracles, since laypeople can do the same. A miracle occurs when a close servant of God brings that miracle with His blessing:

وَ رَسُولاً إِلَىَ بَنِى إِسْرائِيلَ أَنِى قَدْ جِئْتُكُم بِآيَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ أَنِى أَخْلُقُ لَكُم مِنَ الطِّينِ كَهَيْئَةِ الطَّيْرِ فَأَنفُخُ فِيهِ فَيَكُونُ طَيْراً بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَ أُبْرِئُ الأَكْمَهَ وَ الأَبْرَصَ وَ أُحْىِ الْمَوْتَى بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ

وَ أُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا تَأْكُلُونَ وَ مَا تَدَّخِرُونَ فِي بُيُوتِكُمْ إِنَّ فِي ذَالِكَ لَآيَةً لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنتُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ

And [he will be] an apostle to the Children of Israel, [and he will declare,] "I have certainly brought you a sign from your Lord: I will create for you out of clay the form of a bird, then I will breathe into it, and it will become a bird by God's leave. And I heal the blind and the leper and I revive the dead by God's leave. And I will tell you what you have eaten and what you have stored in your houses. There is indeed a sign in that for you, should you be faithful." (3:49)

Jesus did not just pray for the clay to transform into a bird. He *made* it a bird. When God wanted to create Adam, He made his body from clay and then blew into him from His spirit. In a similar way, Jesus, with the help and blessing of God, was also made able to give life to a bird.

Prophet Abraham

The Qur'an tells us of the story of Prophet Abraham when he asked God to show him how He revives the dead:

وَ إِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ أَرِنِي كَيْفَ تُحْيِ الْمَوْتَى قَالَ أَوَ لَمْ تُؤْمِنْ قَالَ بَلَى وَ لَكِن لِيَطْمَئِنَّ قَلْبِي قَالَ فَخُذْ أَرْبَعَةً مِنَ الطَّيْرِ فَصُرْهُنَّ إِلَيْكَ ثُمَّ اجْعَلْ عَلَى كلِّ جَبَلٍ مِنْهُنَّ جُزْءاً ثُمَّ ادْعُهُنَّ يَأْتِينَكَ سَعْياً وَ اعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

> *And when Abraham said, "My Lord! Show me how You revive the dead," He said, "Do you not believe?" He said, "Yes indeed, but in order that my heart may be at rest." He said, "Take four of the birds. Then cut them into pieces, and place a part of them on every mountain, then call them; they will come to you hastening. And know that God is all-mighty and all-wise."* (2:260)

Prophet Abraham did not ask God to show him how the dead are revived; he asked God to show him *how He revives the dead.* Thus, God granted Prophet Abraham the power to give new life. It is noteworthy, however, not to misinterpret this action as polytheistic (*shirk*) as this action is entirely attributed to the doer. It is an action done within the channel of creation; God enables a person to carry it out, even if it is extraordinary. Prophet Abraham was able to understand how God revives the dead because he himself revived those birds.

Thus, the prophets, jinns, angels, and those whom possess knowledge of the book have the ability to play a role in running specific worldly affairs or occurrences in the hierarchy of agents.

The successors of the Prophet have wilāyah

The infallible imams were given the same generative wilāyah in that they were able to play a stronger role than laypeople. They are a medium between God and the people; a channel through which God spreads His mercy and blessings. Though we can directly call on God, the gift of His mercy blessings run through these channels,

creating a necessary hierarchy in society. Of course, communication with God is possible for everyone, and God can bypass any agent in this hierarchy, though His norm is to do things through its causes.[9]

Note: The imams condemned the beliefs of zealots who mistakenly believed in the deity of some of the imams given their knowledge and power. Though they showed kindness to non-Shi'as, the imams were stern with respect to these exaggerations. In one hadith that relates to the knowledge of the imams, 'Ammār Sābāṭī asks Imam al-Ṣldiq as to whether the imams know the unseen (*ghayb*). Imam al-Ṣldiq replied, "No, but when they want to know the unseen, God informs them."[10]

Thus, according to the hadiths, and in line with Qur'anic verses about the knowledge of the unseen, it is clear that knowledge of the unseen belongs only to God:

قُل لايَعْلَمُ مَن فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَ الأَرْضِ الْغَيْبَ إِلا اللَّهُ وَ مَا يَشْعُرُونَ أَيَّانَ يُبْعَثُونَ

9. Kulaynī, Muhammad, *al-Kāfī,* vol. 1, p. 183. The original text is as follows:

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (ع) أَنَّهُ قَالَ: أَبَى اللَّهُ أَنْ يُجْرِيَ الأَشْيَاءَ إِلا بِأَسْبَاب.

10. Kulaynī Muhammad, *al-Kāfī,* vol. 1, p. 257. Full text of hadith in Arabic is as follows:

عَنْ عَمَّارٍ السَّابَاطِيِّ قَالَ: سَأَلْتُ أَبَا عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (ع) عَنِ الإِمَامِ يَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ فَقَالَ: لا وَ لَكِنْ إِذَا أَرَادَ أَنْ يَعْلَمَ الشَّيْءَ أَعْلَمَهُ اللَّهُ ذَلِكَ.

Say, 'No one in the heavens or the earth knows the Unseen except Allah, and they are not aware when they will be resurrected." (27:65)

No one has access to it, except the servants of God whom He is pleased with, such as the prophets and imams:

قُلْ إِنْ أَدْرِی أَقَرِیبٌ ما تُوعَدُونَ أَمْ یجْعَلُ لَهُ رَبِّی أَمَداً عَالِمُ الْغَیْبِ فَلایُظْهِرُ عَلیَ غَیْبِهِ أَحَداً إِلا مَنِ ارْتَضَی مِن رَسُولٍ فَإِنَّهُ یَسْلُکُ مِن بَینْ یَدَیْهِ وَ مِنْ خَلْفِهِ رَصَداً

Say, 'I do not know if what you are promised is near, or if my Lord has set a term for it." Knower of the Unseen, He does not disclose His Unseen to anyone, except to an apostle He approves of. (72:25–27)

ذَالِکَ مِنْ أَنبَاءِ الْغَیْبِ نُوحِیهِ إِلَیْکَ وَ مَا کُنتَ لَدَیْهِمْ إِذْ یُلْقُونَ أَقْلامَهُمْ أَیُّهُمْ یَکْفُلُ مَرْیَمَ وَ مَا کُنتَ لَدَیْهِمْ إِذْ یَخْتَصِمُونَ

These accounts are from the Unseen, which We reveal to you, and you were not with them when they were casting lots [to see] which of them would take charge of Mary's care, nor were you with them when they were contending. (3:44)

تِلْکَ مِنْ أَنبَاءِ الْغَیْبِ نُوحِیهَا إِلَیْکَ مَا کُنتَ تَعْلَمُهَا أَنتَ وَ لا قَوْمُکَ مِن قَبْلِ هَاذَا فَاصْبِرْ إِنَّ الْعَاقِبَةَ لِلْمُتَّقِینَ

These are accounts of the Unseen which We reveal to you. Neither you nor your people used to know them

before this. So be patient. Indeed the outcome will be in favour of the Godwary. (11:49)

This chapter focused on wilāyah as a type of guardianship, and referred to both its literal and technical meanings. *Walī* is the one who is in charge with respect to legislation or creation in managing the world. The Qur'an includes verses that refer to both generative and legislative types of wilāyah. In the first place, God possesses both types: none other than God is the true lawmaker, although He provides it in some measure to those He is pleased with. Additionally, the generative power in the first place belongs to God, but God may give authority in His generative wilāyah to those with whom He is pleased such as His angels and chosen servants. The prophets, imams, mujtahids, and in some cases, parents, have been entrusted with some level of legislative wilāyah with God's permission. The Infallible Imams were given both legislative and generative wilāyah to be a channel through which God spreads His vast mercy.

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